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THE DAWN OF FREEDOM

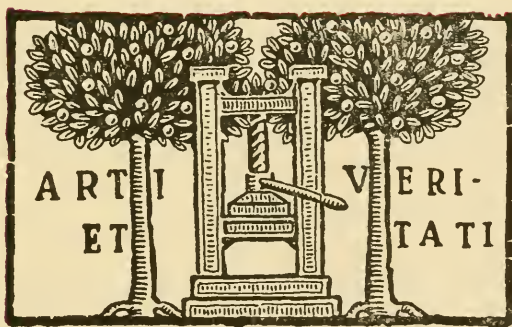
OR

The Last Days of Chivalry

& OTHER POEMS

BY

CHARLES HENRY ST. JOHN



Boston

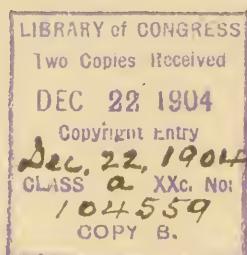
RICHARD G. BADGER

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THE DAWN OF FREEDOM
OR
The Last Days of Chivalry

THE DAWN OF FREEDOM

or

The Last Days of Chivalry

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

—"The Passing of Arthur."

I

A hazy English vale, where kinglly trees,
With folded arms and all their tall tops bathed
In golden sunset, seem to meditate
And sigh in solemn chorals, sad and low;
Far off, the river winds; and farther still,
Upon the farthest verge, the silv'ry gleam
Of ocean ever calm, while over all
Broods undisturb'd repose. Save yon gray
tow'rs,

As fixed and silent as the crags they crown,
It seems a wilderness untrod, unknown.

And yet, not so. Through yonder shady aisle,
Behold that pathway trailing o'er the turf—
The rude, expressive signature of man!
And as we deeper penetrate the gloom,
With senses quickened to each sight and sound,
Strange whispers greet us from the knotted
trunks,

Brown leaves take wing, and twisted roots start
up

And wriggle out of sight among the ferns;
Weird brambles twitch us with their elfish claws,
And unseen hands drop acorns at our feet!
Sudden we burst upon a grassy glade,
A weed-grown garden, and a vassal's cot,

Whose open door invites our pilgrim feet.

Alas! another guest 's expected here;
The poor life-weary forester awaits
The friendly call of Death to set him free.
His wither'd hand a fair young maiden holds,
And in mute anguish gazes on his brow,
As though in every line she read her fate!

But soft! Why starts she, as with bated breath
And finger press'd on lip, she lists intent
And leaves her charge to grope his way alone!
"What hear you, daughter?" moans the dying
man.

"I hear what seems a far-off bugle-blast!"
The maid replies. "As though a landed troop
Were marching up the vale. Oh, can it be
Sir Norman's horn!"

"Nay, daughter, nay—not yet;
'Tis some lone woodbird piping for his mate."
"My father, no! It must be Norman's horn;
For hear you now—that louder, clearer blast,
As nearer still it comes—Sir Norman's horn—
That silver trumpet whose imperious call
Wakes up the drowsy warder on the wall,
Unfurls the banner, gives the bell a voice,
Quickens each foot, and bids all hearts rejoice!—
Oh, many a bird this night will have her mate!"

"Lift, lift me up, my ever-gentle child,
My daughter in all virtues but in blood;
Lift my poor head, that I may lose no note,
No whisper of that horn! It brings fresh life,
Like Spring's first lark. O Ethel! in my day,
A merry day were this. But now, who lives—
Who leaps? . . . Fetch me my hose and coat!"

"Your coat!"

"Nay, but my shroud, my shroud! . . . How
doth this pipe
Bewitch away my wits! That my old heart

Should beat life's march so long, who could
have hoped?

Good Lord, I thank thee that my poor old eyes
May see my boy again—that not unwept,
I bury all my mourners ere myself!
For often did I fear there might be none
To close my filmy lids or drop from theirs
A tear upon my turf. 'Tis pitiful
For one who hath held children on his knee
To die alone."

"My father, where am I?"

"In my heart's core, my sweet; but oh, my sons,
Ethel, my sons!"

So did he sadly mourn,
Upheld within the maiden's tremulous arms,
Till faint and far the music died away.
Then grasping Ethel's hands, a strange, wild
light
Kindled his faded eyes, and all his frame
Shook like a shatter'd oak that strains and
groans,
Struggling against the tempest and the flood,
While thus he spake to her: "Ethel, my child,
The daylight fails—night comes apace, and rest.
The past is past. For thee, the future smiles.
God keep thee as the apple of his eye!
I may not be awake to greet my boy,
If haply he be spared amongst the slain;
But, ere I sleep, I somewhat have to say,
Which doth concern thee much—aye, doth con-
cern,
And must amaze, when told. Great change will
come
O'er all this goodly land, ere yet thou bear
The silver crown of age upon thy brow.
I hear the breathings of the pitiless storm

That soon must rend this wood. With Norman
 dies,
 When he shall die, a race of mighty men
 Who have, through generations, held the rule,
 So claimed, by right divine—we having none
 Except to serve—obedience all our right.
 But there will come a change, as I have said,
 Whether for evil or for good, God wot;
 For, daughter, I have noted long the growth
 Of lordly trees, as well as lowly weeds;
 I've marked how they do sprout, put forth, and
 die,
 And back to mother earth return alike.
 And so with beast and bird and creeping thing,—
 All things of earthly mould, both high and low;
 Each hath its time, and then yields up its room
 To other occupant; and thus it goes.
 So now I clearly see a change will come—
 A change in all our manners, faiths, and laws.
 How soon, God knows; but when the trees are
 sere,
 Is Winter nigh to scatter all their leaves.
 So must the out-worn garments of old times
 Be cast aside for new, when holy rites,
 Sweet manners, gentle usages, and deeds
 Of knightly valor be no more. And then,—
 Ah! then, I fear me, will the ties that bind
 The nation like a tree from tap to top—
 Sire to son, subject to suzerain lord,
 Pastor to people—be dissolved like snow
 I' the sun's eye; whiles, in that upstart age,
 Will honor, virtue, reverence, and truth
 Rot at the core. . . . But hold! Death's icy hand
 Is closing 'round my heart; so must I haste
 My few last words. Sir Norman hath no heir—
 Mark well, my child—no heir to follow him;
 And whose may be this land, when he shall quit,

Comes not within my judgment, nor my hope.
But this much, Ethel, did I yearn to see—
Leaving the issue i' the heart of God—
If Heaven hath led my Edgar back to me,
That thou and he be wed, so what may come,
To each alike may come."

"What! Edgar wed?"

"This grafting I did purpose; but, my child,
Such may not be; for thou'rt the lily fair
And he the weed. . . . But sometimes think
of him—

Ah, think of him sometimes, poor churl, when
thou

Shalt blossom forth the Lily of the Vale!
For that he loved you well, I well do know;
And you did call him brother—loved him, too,
And were indeed as one until this day.
So, if thou may'st some gracious favor show,
Or lighten by a link the vassal-chain,
So do, so do, and thou shalt have reward."
("Oh Heaven, the fatal sign! Sweet Reason quits
Her crumbling tenement, and leaves his mind
The sport of fantasy.) My father, what?
Wed Edgar, my own brother and my blood,—
Edgar!"

"Nay, good my child; not so, not so;
Thy brother—not thy blood. Not to this trunk
Did ever such fair fruitage owe its bloom.
The crimson life that dances in thy veins
Is alien to this soil. But thou shalt know
More fully by-and-by. . . . I was to blame
In letting thee so root in my poor heart,
And bind thy tendrils 'round me; but they
pluck'd

My fruit, my blooming branches, my sweet boys;
And, year by year, I thought to yield thee up;
But, year by year, I less could yield thee up,

As more and more you wrapt me round and
round,
And made all bloom where barrenness had been.”
“My father, oh, how strange! Why yield me up?
To whom, yield up?”

“Nay, time serves not to tell.
But thou, ere many days, shalt know it all.
I could not yield thee up. But I was wrong—
I did thee cruel wrong; so when I sleep,
I would that thou to Lady Mabel go—
Sir Norman’s gentle spouse, and thy true
aunt,——”
“My aunt!”

“Aye, child; thy mother’s sister, she;—
And bear this voucher, which a clerk did write
And my teeth bite, wherein is truly told
How thou wast found, how sheltered many a
year,
And who thou art, that I may hope for grace.
This do; the rest will come as Heaven elect.
And now I’ve said, so lay me gently down,
That I may sleep a while; for I am weak—
Sore weary—needing rest. . . . God bless thee,
child!
Wake me when Edgar comes—my little boy.”

With folded hands, and eyes like violets
Dew-bathed, sat Ethel, lost in thought,—her
brow
Upturned to the slow-deep’ning blue of eve.
Around her, as an aureole, the light
Fell tenderly, while through her parted lips
There seem’d to breath a prayer. Oh, who may
guess
What wonder-visions visited her soul—
What fragrant memories—what hopes—what
fears—

What questionings that never may be solved!
She seem'd as one awaken'd from a dream;
Yet doubtful if indeed it were a dream.
But when she look'd upon that face again,
'Twas still, and cold, and dumb; she was alone.

Now, in the ancient chronicle, we read
That Ethel was the daughter of an earl;
And that, in budding childhood, she was
snatch'd

By gipsy prowlers from her drowsy nurse,
And swiftly borne beyond her father's ken;
That neither bribe, nor threat, nor solemn curse
Could ere restore her to his arms again.
So when no tidings came—no track, no trace,—
Through many a waning moon, the widow'd
man

Sought death in battle's front, since life to him,
With all his wealth and titles, power and fame,
Was torture without her.

One day that band
Of swart and lawless wanderers encamp'd
Beneath the shadow of Sir Norman's oaks,
And nigh the river's brim, and Ethel's feet
Incautious, wander'd far into the wood;
When, lo, she met the vassal and his son,—
The youngest of five lads,—who, Edgar named,
Was now his Benjamin. The girl's fair locks
And innocent blue eyes, the old man judged,
Mark'd not the offspring of the gipsy race;
But, questing her, none other source she knew.
"I doubt not," said the father to the lad,
"This is the lost child of the fallen earl.
We will conceal her safe, and cast her cloak
Beside the river-margin, so the band
Will deem her drown'd, and seek her not again."

So they, with tender, loving hands, convey'd
The gentle wand'rer to their lowly home,
And hid her till the camp was broken up.

Now Ethel was beloved by all,—by Edgar
More than all—the tend'rest tie was theirs.
But cruel wars arose, and one by one,
The forester's strong sons were swept away
Upon the crimson flood, until not one
Was left; for Edgar had been three years gone
With brave Sir Norman to the Holy Land,
And never a message came to tell his fate.
But now Death comes with cold, remorseless
hand,
And Ethel, stripp'd of all on earth she loves,
Twice-orphan'd, must go forth without a friend!

Home from the wars again,
Home from the wars!
Lady fair, lady-love, rise up to meet us!
Rosy lip, azure eye, open to greet us!
Home from the wars again,
Home!

Home from the wars again,
Home from the wars!
Fill the bowl, troll the song; we shall have
pleasure;
Love, wine, and minstrelsy flow without
measure!
Home from the wars again,
Home!

II

Lone, silent, sad, Sir Norman moved along,
And curb'd his charger with a nerveless hand;
His dark eyes, downward gazing, fail'd to mark
The flowers that bent obeisance as he pass'd.
He seem'd as one with secret grief oppress'd,
Or sick and weary of a heartless world,—
As one who oft into the sea of life
Had dropp'd the sounding-plummet, but to find
A slimy bed, where shatter'd argosies
With all their silent mariners are laid,—
Whiles in the rear his comrades canter by
With jest and song, and laughter unrepress'd.
For now the wars are over, and they come
With hearts full-freighted to their lady-loves,
And mem'ries stored with many a wondrous tale
Of lands remote and regions of romance,
Where truth and fable mingle in the clouds
Of gilded dust that veil the wheels of Time,—
Strange tales of fiery climes and shimm'ring
sands,
Of deserts wild, palm groves, and phantom lakes;
Of caravans that move with noiseless tread;
Of dusky hordes of wild-eyed, savage men;
Of pyramids immense that reach the skies,
Whose dark, mysterious chambers seem to mock
Th' impatient ear with mutt'rings faint and far!
Of silent cities buried in the sand—
Titanic bones of empires dead, unknown—
Pale, marble ghosts of dusty dynasties!
Of whisp'ring Memnon and the awful Sphinx,
Whose stern and stony smile doth seem to hint
Of things unutt'able and ages dim;
Of ancient Nilus and the Middle Main,
With tombs of mighty monarchies enzoned—

Famed regions full of wonder and delight!
But most of all, of that most hallow'd Land
Which gave Immanuel birth, will they relate,—
That Sacred Shrine, too long by paynim hands
Profaned—the Holy Sepulchre; but now,
Through blood and treasure, rescued to the
Faith.

And much of stormy billows have they seen;
Of shipwreck, too, among the Cyclades;
Of weary weeks in waiting, till appear'd
One little mote upon the misty verge,
That slowly swell'd into a sail—a ship—
A friendly fleet to bear them to their loves!

And now how sweet this breath of native air,
The dust of travel fanning from their locks!
These hills and dales—these glens and groves,
how fair!

These fruitful trees, these flower-enamell'd fields,
These flocks and herds and little twitt'ring birds,
These hawthorn hedges, nay, these wayside
weeds—

The very fringe and ravellings of Home—
Sure never seemed these old familiar scenes
So precious in their sight!

Then why so sad,
Sir Norman? Prithee, why so mute? Know'st
not

Those queenly tow'rs that deck yon leafy height,
As with a coronal of fretted gold?

Thrice hath the monarch of the rimy beard
These branches stript and hung his pearls
thereon,

Since o'er thy crest they waved their verdure last.
Death hast thou met and dash'd his dart aside
With such a brand as only Norman wilds.

Thy homeward march is one wild peal of joy,
When maids forget their madrigals to sing
Your praises only, as your banners flout
Their wide-flung casements. Ev'ry favor'd
street,

With arch, and wreath, and rippling pennon gay,
Roars with one shout of "Welcome to the
brave!"

And now, Sir Knight, but wind thy bugle-horn,
And yon gray walls will fling their echoes back
With merry peals, unheard for many a day!
Then will the link'd and studded portals ope
As if by magic, while the pond'rous draw
Swings creaking down to span the slimy moat.
Then will each court and corridor resound
With hurrying footfalls and delighted cries;
While flutt'ring figures crowd the topmost
tow'rs

To catch the first glimpse of thy snowy plume!
What! yet unmoved? In sooth, but thine must
be

A heart of lead beneath that glitt'ring mail!
Thou comest again the victor, as of old,
And walk'st so high above the wond'ring world
That Malice finds no loophole for his shaft,
And Envy hides his guilty head in shame.
On every side, behold the evidence
Of loyal hearts and true. The landscape smiles,
The very trees do image forth thy deeds;
The fountains gush thy praise, the dewy flow'rs,
With cunning skill, Sir Norman of the Vale,
Are trained to blush thy name; the stately bird,
Mistaking for the sun thy dazzling shield,
Unfolds the gorgeous splendor of his train;
While dimpled children dance before thy feet,
And scatter roses where thou deign'st to tread.

Then wherefore droop, since ev'ry heart is thine?
Not thus do heroes fly to love's embrace,
And seek the guerdon of their valor there.

But Norman murmurs sadly to his soul:
"And this is all—the sum of all my life—
These passing voices and these fading wreaths;
A blood-stain'd record written with the sword!
Men have less cause to love me than to fear;
Then wherefore shout they 'welcome!' as I pass?
Except to drag them forth to gory War,
What have I done that they should welcome me?
I would indeed that I deserved their praise,
And what their lips confess, their bosoms felt!
But empty is the homage that is paid,
Where less than homage would be more than
sin!

A grateful tear upon a vassal's cheek
For some good deed achieved, as man for man,
Would be a gem more precious in my sight
Than costliest ruby in a monarch's crown!"
Then grew Sir Norman dumb again, and seem'd
To mingle with the shadows of the grove.

Meanwhile, the tremor of trampling hoofs,
Tinkle of trappings and murmur of tongues
Come louder and louder, nearer and nearer,—
Come with the dust-cloud dimming the tree-tops,
Come with the silv'ry clangor of trumpets
Shaking their melody over the vale!
See through the branches the gleaming of lances,
Flashing of helmets, and flutter of plumes!
Home from the wars again, home from the wars!
Rings the old castle with plaudits of welcome,
Reels ev'ry turret with revelry wild!

Now merrily sit, my comrades all,
And lay the sword away;
Bedeck with flow'rs the festal hall,
The beakers fill, the minstrels call;
Let ev'ry heart be gay!

We've put our vaunting foes to rout,
And made the traitors swing;
Then push the flagon round about;
The first that falls, we'll turn him out,
The last shall be our king!

But oh! sad thoughts of those we left
Beneath the cypress and the palm,—
Of sorrowing souls and hearts bereft,
For whom there is no balm,—
Steal in like Winter's icy breath,
When least we dream of death!
And while we pledge the sainted slain,
They seem to stretch their viewless hands
Athwart the billows and the sands,
And grasp our own again!

III

Beside his grave, beneath the yew. they stand,
Edgar and Ethel. In their features blend
Rapture and anguish, with some subtler shade
That seems despair,—as though invisible hands
Did sunder them forever! Yet entwined
They stand beside his grave. Few words they
breathe—
Heart answering broken heart! 'Tis that one
hour
Which comes to ev'ry soul—that fateful hour
Whose ev'ry moment burns into the brain,

And leaves imperishable record there
To the last pulse—the keystone hour of life!
Than she, no fairer ever man adored;
Than he, no worthier ever woman loved.
And they were one from infancy to this
Dark hour of agony beside the grave—
This grave which doth unite them and divide;
She to the homage of a hundred knees,
He to his rustic toil. But God alone
Holds in his heart the issue of this hour—
This burning hour beneath the yew's deep shade!

Sir Norman was the last of all his line
And though in all the annals of his house
No baseness ever stained one noble name,
Sir Norman was the glory and the prime;
And, like an autumn sun, the name, with him,
Went down in splendor o'er the with'ring leaf
And fruitless, sapless trunk of Chivalry.
As valiant as the best, a purer air
His loftier spirit breathed, and none there were
Among his royst'ring peers could measure him.
In his demesne, an ancient abbey stood,
Where many a pensive hour Sir Norman pass'd
In silent reverie or converse deep
Of questions never raised in camp or court.
Naithless, no gloomy anchorite was he,
Nor one to chill the fervid noon of joy
With dismal clouds of spleen-engender'd creeds.
“But life is more than festival and war,
And more than wealth and lands, renown and
love,”
So whisper'd Reason; “and thou must achieve
Some deed more worthy to embalm thy name—
Though peerless thou in ev'ry knightly grace—
Than bidding wine in ruby rivers flow,

Or aiding love-lorn damsels in distress,
Or hunting tim'rous creatures of the field,
Or winning laurels in the tournament,
Or hewing red roads through embattled hosts."
So 'mid the whirl and flush of revelry,
The sweetest music lost its power to please;
The rarest nectar of all sunny climes
Flow'd by his lips unquaff'd; the fairest fruit
That ever hung 'round Autumn's swarthy brow
Were Dead-Sea apples to his taste and sight;
Nay, even woman's self, with all her charms,—
All, all were impotent, insipid, vain,—
All vain to satisfy his yearning soul
Or fill the measure of his conscious need.
And so, by pensive spirits led, he left
The lusty revellers, and thrusting back
The silken folds that round the casement fell,
Stepp'd out upon the balcony and gazed
Full long and silent down the dizzy steep,
As if some Satan tempted him to cast
Himself and all his burdens on the rocks.
And then, with folded hands, as if in prayer,
He raised his sad eyes to the sleepless stars.
Th' eternal glory of those awful heights—
So infinite, so populous, so still!—
The dreamy landscape and the wooing winds
Whisp'ring their softest music in his ear,
Calm'd down the troubled currents of his heart,
And thus he breathed into the ear of Night:
"Ye worlds, ye almost spiritual hosts
That stand about heaven's vestibule, to guide
Lone-wand'ring spirits o'er the sunless gulf,
And shudder lest they miss the narrow way,—
How do ye shame, with your unchanging beams,
The majesty of man! In vain he builds
Upon the rock-ribb'd earth for perpetuity,

And plants his ensign on the buttress'd wall,
 And dreams that marble shaft and granite pile
 Shall awe the coming ages with his name!
 A few years pass—how few!—and men shall ask,
 'Who rear'd these crumbling pillars?' but receive
 No answer; nay, not one to tell of him!
 Then why this flatt'ring hope—this fond desire—
 Which e'en the basest with the worthiest feel,
 That, in the grateful memory of mankind,
 Some lasting record of ourselves be writ,—
 Some monumental deed that shall endure
 Eternal as the stars? Oh, is it not
 Our nobler self within that prompts the wish—
 The hope that lifts our souls above the brutes?
 Yet those there are who cast no anxious thought
 Beyond this little life, as if that life
 Were but a festival, a holiday;
 And who, like gaudy butterflies, despise
 The joyless prudence of the painful ant
 Which, in the stillest hour of summer's prime
 Doth hear the howlings of the wintry wind.
 And so we differ all, as yonder stars,—
 Some wondrous bright, some faint and far away;
 But doubtless all as it were best to be."
 "Ah! but they hear thee not," a sweet voice
 trill'd;
 "They're not so near as I. And, Norman mine,
 Why ask the stars for what full well we know,
 And leave the bowl, fair-kiss'd, to blush for thee,
 And all thy guests upon the top and plume
 Of this night's merriment? I marvell'd much
 What phantom purpose lured you from my side,
 And more admired what held, till round my heart
 The icy-coiling terrors 'gan to fold!
 What—what, I fancied, if his brain grew dazed
 With this too-heady rout, and leaning o'er

The battlements to medicine his lungs
With God's pure air, his pow'rless fingers sip!—
Oh! then I saw upon the rocks beneath,
A sight most dread! And forth the cold drops
ooz'd,

Beading my brow, till I could bide no more.
So shall I ever hate those rocks beneath,
Nor tempt this murd'rous parapet again!"
But all her words were wasted; for he stood
As one transfix'd, and gazed at her with eyes
That saw not her, but some dim, shady form—
Some visionary creature of the mind,
A million leagues beyond,—and vaguely sigh'd,
"The last and first!"

Whereat she tinkled out
A timid laugh, and vow'd that he was like
The whisp'ring Memnon. Then a shadow pass'd
Athwart her pleading features, as she said,
"Is 't not ungallant to forsake the field
And all your doughty knights at such a pinch?
Nay, thou, the Flower of Chivalry, consent
An empty stool should bear me company!
What if some other dared usurp that throne
For very shame that I was left alone?"
"Sweet Mab," he answer'd, "thou art not alone,
And never shall be while these pulses throb!"
Then stooping, lightly kiss'd her dewy lids
And lips all tremulous, and closer press'd
Her lithe form to his bosom, as he breathed,
"'Twas I who was alone! But I do grieve
If I have lessen'd by a feather's weight
The pleasures of this night. Thine ears did steal
The coinage of my dreams; alas! fair thief,
Thou art not much enrich'd; for I do lack
That sweet philosophy that maketh thee
A flower, a bird, a child—nay, better still,

An angel pure!"

"Oh, no, my lord, not I;
I'm but a woman, with a woman's heart—
Now sad, now glad as clouds or sunshine clothe
My little world—a woman—nothing more—
Nor less—thy wife."

"Yea, so thou art indeed!

Thank Heaven, thou art! O Mabel, save in thee,
How poor and bankrupt is your Norman's life!
How empty of all purpose, end and aim!
How like a glimm'ring taper dying out
In dark, oblivious, everlasting night!"

"Oh, think not thus, my love; 'tis neither just
Nor wholesome thus to think. Your sun of life
Hath not yet reach'd his noon—your moon
Her full—your year, her summer prime; as yet,
Your fruit is green, your harvest still to come."
"Scant crop, and brief the time."

"The longest life

Ill spent, were brief, the briefest long that serves
Life's purposes. What necessary point
Of knightly 'complishment doth Norman lack?
Is wise, pure, brave; what more should Norman
be?"

"A more that should belittle all the rest;
For all the rest are but as bubbles blown
By merry urchins, or as passing shows
That for an hour make slaves forget their chains!
There is no safety in extorted power;
'Tis built on sand, and great must be its fall!
'Twere better serfs were bidden to our boards,
Than for themselves discover they are men—
Which one day they must find; for men they are,
With winged thoughts that lift them to the skies
To soar like eagles o'er the jealous walls
That hide the weakness of their governors.

Vain is the glory that is reap'd in blood.
Who draws the sword shall perish with the
sword;

Enduring power is built on love alone.
There is in ev'ry soul a reaching out
To years unborn——"

"Why, Norman, is it thou!"

And Mabel slipp'd his arms, and backward drew
In mimic wonderment and playful scorn.

"Dost wear a cowl? Nay, 'tis a cap and plume!

And, holy sire, is this a sackcloth robe

Wrapt round thy lean and penitential frame?

What! velvet, monk, and 'broidery of gold,

And gems that twinkle brighter than the stars!

A sword, forsooth! Is this thy crucifix?

And that thy rosary—a silver chain,

With silken sash in lieu of hempen rope?

Oh, what a gallant monk and reverend knight;

For, marry, both in thee are mix'd and marr'd!"

Then with her white hands perch'd like coupled
doves

Upon his arm, she coo'd into his ear:

"O Norman, love, be never less than thou,

Though less than thou were more than other
men;

But when yourself you overtop the rest,

As doth this castled height yon humbler hills.

Your mind with too much pond'ring hath, as
'twere,

Been warpt to one incline, and springs not back

To all its fair proportions, without help.

This one thought is the gangrene of the brain—

It eats and eats till all is foul disease.

'Tis like a lens that bends a thousand beams

To one bright-burning point—a fiery dart;

Or as a brook, when choked by drifted wrack,

Frets out a lawless channel through the fields,
And, gath'ring force from every tiny rill,
Sweeps down with wild destruction to the deep.
Nay, 'tis not healthy, Norman, mark you that;
For what is madness, but a mind possess'd—
Enslaved and shackled to one tyrant thought?"

"Nay; fear not, Mab; my madness will not
harm

The slightest film of whatsoe'er is right,
But may, perchance, endanger what is wrong.
One thought, you say, possesses me? Alas!
A thousand thoughts hold parley in my mind;
And when they've settled their disputed points,
I'll let you know which wins; till then, sing on."

"Sing on? Grieve on, you mean. Ah, cruel you,
To whet my appetite and then withhold
The fruit! Oh, is that love? But woe is me!
I fear I know too much about it now—
Too much already ere you've said a word."

"I would," he said, "you were an oracle!"
"And I," quoth she, "that you were all you are.
But as for me, I would be anything
But what I am, if only loved by thee."
She ceased; but spake in tears more eloquent,
Which he, low-bending, answer'd in like words,
Till came her voice again so softly sad
That all the little zephyrs held their breath,
Lest they might blow her tender words away:
"O Norman mine! the myrtle-boughs are green,
And blossoms gather on the fig-tree still;
God knows what fruit may ripen i' the sun!"

"Sweetheart, thou know'st me not," Sir Nor-
man said—

"Thou know'st me not," he said, and deeply
sigh'd.

"Let not such false light flicker in your soul,

Since, many moons, they have gone out in mine,
Whose hope hath plumed her for a loftier flight
Than thy fond spirit broods o'er in distress.
Shall not the issue of the mind alone
Survive the charr'd foundations of the world?
Nay, weep not, Mab; I'm merry as a kid;
I've had my fortune told. 'Twas passing strange!
Would'st like to hear it, love?"

"Oh! let it be
No lightsome tale," she moan'd; "for such I
have
No stomach now."

"Nay, 'tis as dark as night,"
He darkly said.

"Oh, prithee, then, be mute;
My spirit swims in shadows even now."

"Well, Mab, my tale shall be a twilight one,"
He answered, smiling, "neither dark nor light;
But both or either as you may divine.
One noon, in Palestine, as we encamp'd
Within the shadow of a cypress-grove,
(For such there are beneath the fiercest skies—
Fair children of the sunshine and the dew,
That heartless Ruin hath not heart to blast),
There came a dusky woman and her boy—
A very Hagar with her Ishmael—
A wild-eyed, wolfish, hunger-bitten pair,
Chance-nurtured, dwelling in the tombs with
bats

And basilisks. I see that woman now—
Her weird, fantastic garb, her skinny claws
That hawk-like, grasp'd the little dole I dropt,
When she, in words interpreted to me
Unfolded all my past and future years.
I swear to thee, as page by page she read
The annals of my life, I was amazed;

She knew me better than I knew myself;
And, more than all, what things she prophesied
Have partly come to pass. But this she said,—
Which gives me cause of doubt—that I should
be

The last of all my lineage, yet the first!
Now, Mab, the last I am; how, then, the first?
That I would know. Can you unravel it?”
“I can,” she said; “and think it passing strange
That thou, with all thy gold, shouldst hoard such
dross!

Thou art deceived. Thy dragoman, no doubt,
Was some old friend of thine who kenn’d thee
well,—

P’rhaps held thee on his knee,—and knew as
much

The barb’rous jargon of the gipsy hag
As did yourself—some oily Judas-monk,
I warrant you, as crafty as a fox,
Whose guile is only equal’d by his greed!
Unravel it, forsooth! It needs no seer—
No Daniel to do that. ’Twas thus and thus:

‘Thy days are number’d, and thou hast no heir
To all thy vast domain. Thou art the last;
But grant the Church thy lands, and thou shalt
be

The first, the best, the flow’r of all thy house.’
Now did not he—your meek interpreter,
Just breathe—just whisper some such pious
hint?”

“My ghostly father, who was standing nigh,
Did hazard some such jest,” Sir Norman said,
“But did I never tell it thee before?”

“Nay, never,” she replied; “nor could I hope
To hear such fancies till your eyes be dim,
With fourscore winters powder’d on your brow!”

"Nay, Mabel; mock me not, nor jest at Fate;
What Heaven ordains, may mortal man escape?"

"What Heaven ordains, we wish not to escape;
But when Heaven warns of what Time's womb
contains,

The hallow'd message comes not through the
lips

Of greasy monk or skinny, wrinkled hag;
But angels, pure and viewless as the breath
Of perfumed airs that scarce the aspens move,
Glide softly as the moonbeams to your couch,
And fill your inmost soul with heavenly light."

"True, Mabel, true; for so they come tonight!
But list thee, love; e'en now, as I did gaze
O'er yonder quiv'ring dome, I saw a star
Most wondrous bright fly wildly from her throne,
Dimming her sisters till herself grew dim,
And then was seen no more—some Hagar-orb
Driv'n forth of heaven to weep. What bodes it,
Mab?

See you no sign nor portent in the sight?
Or was it one more world to judgment call'd—
Some poor, sad world, like ours—to render up
Account of all its deeds? And yet we hear
No discord in the everlasting hymn,
Nor seems Night's crown less lovely by the
loss—

So little miss'd is one so fair a gem!
What would you, Mab?"

"I would," quoth she, "that you
Should learn how time flies by your flying stars;
For now have vacant stools been long enough
Our deputies. Tonight, my liege, when all
These noisy wassailers have sunk them down
To swiney slumber, and our halls are void,

And voice no ruder than the cricket's chirp
Disturbs the silence of our drowsy towers,
I'll whisper somewhat in your willing ear,
Will populate your brain with dancing dreams."

So went they in, and left the battlements
To bats and fairy revellers in the dew.

Oh, sweet be all thy dreams, love!
Lightly, happily rest—
Pure as the silv'ry beams, love,
That dapple thy heaving breast.
Nothing can harm, nothing alarm
Thee, my own, my best;
For sleepless Love, around, above,
Doth ward thy silken nest.

IV

The mellow twilight deepens, and the night
Sinks softly o'er the vale. Like some stern chief,
Forgetful of his wounds in dalliance sweet,
The grim tow'rs deign to smile. No sounds
awake

But such as soothe the ear; some vesper-bell
Slow-swinging, far away, some tinkling lute
High up in yon recess, and the faint sigh
Of the night-rising breeze. There is a spell,
A witchery in the hour, more weird, methinks,
Than middle-night; for then the watchful stars
Companion us; but in this gloaming-time—
This indistinct half-daylight and half-dark—
In such a place as this—a velvet lawn
Shaded with many a tree—dim, spectral forms,
Pale, hollow-eyed, are seen,—unquiet souls,
Who shun the light, and murmur in link'd pairs

Beneath the elms! Ah, well-a-day, may Heaven
Defend us! See! with silent steps they come—
Two human figures, gliding o'er the dew—
A maid and cavalier! The dusky light
But half-reveals their features; yet we start
At some remember'd likeness as they pass
And, melting into shade, are seen no more!
Come, let us in—the night grows chill and dark,
And either ghosts or lovers haunt this park!

Like waves that leave no trace upon the sands
Of all their beauty and of all their might,
The days flow'd on, till one day went there forth
Swift pursuivants through all the wide domain,
Proclaiming to Sir Norman's vassalry,
That in the castle-court, on such a noon,
They gather, all who may, both old and young.
Then was there doubt and wonder in the land
And anxious dread, when many a mother wrapt,
Within convulsive arms, her tender care,
As ever she would moan, "Who will provide
For these, our little ones, if he be gone—
Their only stay? Oh, why, Sir Norman, why
Is war so sweet to thee, that is to us
So full of bitterness? O wretched life!
Today, all nestling in our lowly cot;
Tomorrow, wrench'd asunder, ne'er to meet!
Our pottage season'd with unceasing tears;
Trembling at night for what the morn may bring.
Our innocent babes, that should be founts of
joy,
Are wells of agony, since they are nursed
Not for the comfort of the breasts they press,
But the wild license of a lordly will!"
And so the night grew darker with despair,
Till dawn'd the morn of doubt-dispersing day.

Hail, Morning, emblem of immortal life,
Of youth and beauty and eternal joy!
All fresh and fragrant, as with rosy smile,
Thou shakest the dewy pearls from thy green
 robes,
And leaning o'er thy couch of purple clouds,
Dost gild the mountain-tops with hues of heaven.
A million hearts rejoice—the forest rings—
The weary watcher who hath waited long
To greet thy rising, breathes his orison:
“Now lettest thou thy servant part in peace;
For lo, at last mine aged eyes behold
The dawn of Freedom for all humankind!”

Now o'er Sir Norman's tow'rs gay banners
 float—
A festal sign—and wide the gates are flung,
And soon, slow-winding up the zig-zag road,
Are seen a motley crowd of every age—
Young men and old, gray sire and lusty youth,
Mothers with babes in arms, and maidens fresh
As dewy rosebuds bursting into bloom.
But ere the shadows creep beneath the walls,
The latest stands within the castle-court—
A mute, expectant throng; the only sound,
A low and muffled murmur in the air
Like swarming bees or billows far away,
Till clangs the castle-bell the hour of noon,
When on the balcony Sir Norman stands
In sight of all. Then, like a mountain-storm,
Sudden and wild, up roars the mighty shout,
“God save our liege, Sir Norman o' the Vale!”
Now blare the trumps, and all is hushed again,
When comes Sir Norman's voice to ev'ry ear:
“Ye have obey'd my summons without fail,
As ever was your wont when duty call'd

And Battle's crimson banners waved on high.
But now the wars are over, and secure,
We may with honor sheathe the vengeful sword
And till, once more, our long-neglected fields.
'Twas on your breasts the fury of the waves
First beat and spent their force. Ye stood as
stand

The rooted cliffs; and though 'tis rich reward
To know that ye have served your country well
In time of need, as many a scar attests;
Yet 'tis my purpose that you now possess
The gift your valor won—your lawful right—
Your right, which God, who gave you souls,
designed,

But selfish Tyranny too long withheld;
And hence this gift will be the gift of God,
Whom humbly thank for all that may ensue.
These lands that I do hold by right of birth,
Are mine alone; and with them I do claim
What thereon is of forest, field, and stream;
And what therein do live—fish, bird, and beast,—
To use or give, to hold or to divide;
And this, with you as vassals of the soil.
For, in the wondrous providence of God,
I have no heir to follow my decease.
Yet, should there be who may dispute my right,
Now let him come and make his title good.”
Which said, he gazed around with folded arms,
While all the trumpets blew a ringing blast
To ev'ry point—east, west, and north, and south;
But only Echo answered to the call.
Then spake Sir Norman, with uncovered head,
As though recording angels hover'd round:
“There cometh none my purpose to annul.
So now give ear and witness to my will,
Which in few words I here make known to all.

In God, his name, amen. I now proclaim,
From this day and forever you are free—
Free of all fief or feud, tithing or tax,
Save what with your consent may be imposed.
Nor without twelve good men of like estate
Thereto agreed, shall any be condemn'd
Of whatsoever crime he stand accused
In open court, wherein for all alike
Shall even-handed Justice hold the scales.
Free to go forth as men with equal rights,
To labor for yourselves and little ones,
Whom may you nurture in the love of God,
Their country, and their king. That without
dread
Of mortal man, however lowly be
The four walls of your dwelling, they shall stand
Impregnable. Through ragged loup and rent,
Wind, hail, and rain may enter; but, unbid,
Not e'en the king may come within your gates—
The king himself, whose grace may Heaven defend."

He ceased, and naught the solemn silence
broke
Save twitt'ring swallows circling round the
tow'rs;
For wordless wonder sate on ev'ry face!
They fathomed not the gift—they only knew
That some great boon was granted, but no more.
And so the swallows twitter'd, till arose
One deep breath, long repress'd, when each did
search
The other's face for answer—still in vain.
Then mutely turn'd they to the balcony,
As though to seek solution of their doubts;
But all had vanished save the sentinels,

Whose polish'd armor glitter'd in the sun.
So while they stood amazed, and what to do—
Whether to weep or laugh, to go or stay,
Knew not—the great doors open'd, and a host
Of nimble menials roll'd the viands forth,—
Great tuns of beer and mighty trenchers heap'd
With savory meats and wheaten bread and fruit,
In wonderful profusion and the best.
And then came minstrels and gay troubadours—
Their bonnets garlanded with faded flowers
That once did kiss the Arno or the Rhone,
Or sip the dews of Andalusian fields,
Or star the green champaigns of Languedoc.
Then follow'd motley clowns with quip and jest,
And tumblers walking with their heels in air,
And morris-dancers cap'ring round and round,
And pretty pages, with their golden curls,
And high-born maids, and gallant cavaliers,
And grizzly vet'rans of a hundred fields.
And last of all, Sir Norman came alone,
With genial smile and words of kindly cheer—
The very words they lisped—their mother-
tongue—
That in each heart should long-remember'd live.

So while they pass the beaker hand to hand,
They wonder at the bounty of their host,
And wonder how much bacon is consumed,
And how much beer, and bread, and brawn, and
fruit,
And what, withal, is meant by being free!
They are like children wand'ring in a maze—
A fairy-haunted wood! A golden mist—
A dreamy light half-hides and half-reveals
The unfamiliar splendor of the scene.
What they had gain'd beyond this banqueting,

They fail to grasp—no doubt some precious gift
Which floats before their vision like the moon,
When tawny vapors scud along the sky—
Now dimly seen, now swallow'd up and lost!
They stand bewilder'd on the borderland—
The hazy bounds betwixt the Old and New.
As yet they know not Vassalage is dead,
Nor feel, as yet, that Liberty is born.
They see, but cannot comprehend, the signs
Of dissolution and renascent life,
Nor hear the trumpets of advancing Change!

But such a merry day was never known
In all the land—a day of jollity,
Of dextrous feat and game, of dance and feast,
And sweet forgetfulness of toil and care.
The fallow-deer fled off in wild dismay
And hid in deepest shade; the restless rooks
Wheel'd round their lofty holds in chatt'ring
flights,
And the scared rabbits burrow'd in the ferns.
Fair children chased each other o'er the lawns
And screamed their joy; while, group'd beneath
the oaks,
Old crones and graybeards wonder'd more and
more
At all they saw, and knew not why they wept!
So pass'd the joyous hours; but when the sun
Made golden vistas down the long green lanes
The trumpet sounded and the great bell swung.
Then gather'd all the multitude about
The marble steps, whereon, 'mid flashing gems,
Gay robes, and nodding plumes, appear'd
Sir Norman and the Abbot of the Vale.
And then when all was still, Sir Norman said:
"One summer day, a priceless pearl was stol'n

From out the household treasure of an Earl.
Keen search was made on ev'ry side in vain,
And sore he felt the loss, since over all
His wealth, he prized this pearl—the parting
gift

Of his sweet bride in heaven; for he was lone,
With none to share the burden of his woe.
But, lest his heart be wither'd up with grief,
Ere yet the budding promise of his youth
Should ripen into deeds, he drew his blade,
And bravely falling with the fallen brave,
Did leave behind him but a noble name.
But ere the last breath flutter'd in his breast,
He thus did whisper to his faithful friend,
'If ever my lost pearl shall come to light,
Entrust it only to a brave man's care.'
So all remembrance of the missing gem
Died out, save in the bosom of that friend.
Now what befell this pearl, and where 'twas hid
Through many a weary year, and by what hand
'Twas filched, and by whom found, 'twere long
to tell;

Suffice to know 'twas kept with sacred care,
That did reward its guardian wondrous well.
And, lo! that pearl is in my keeping now,
And you shall see it ere the setting sun."
Whereat a shout went up from ev'ry throat,
That seem'd to shake the castle's granite walls,
Which, when it ceased, Sir Norman spake again:

"Full many a brave man follow'd us to war,
Whose mighty shades we humbly follow now—
Who, as they stood upon the utmost verge,
And gazed with undimm'd eyes upon the sun
Of immortality, eclipsed us all;
And dumbly did we watch them, glory-crown'd,
O'erleap life's bourn and stand among the gods!

But one there is among the favor'd few—
Whose name burns bright among the brightest
names—

To whom, by valor, as by plighted troth,
This pearl belongs.” And waving then his hand,
Sir Norman cried, “Bring forth the long-lost
pearl—

This priceless recompense of Love and Worth—
This living pearl that bravery hath won,
And won the right, too, of advanced estate.”

Like swans emerging from the tufted reeds
That barricade some secret river-cave,
Came Lady Mabel through the bending plumes,
A modest maiden leading by the hand.
Pearl-white the maiden's robe; her sunlit curls
A golden fillet bound, from which a rose
Drooped down and kissed the rose upon her
cheek.

Meanwhile, like serried waves that shoreward
rush,

The eager gossips gathered 'round the door
To eye the long-lost pearl this maiden held.
When, lo! 'twas she herself who proved the gem;
For this was Ethel, daughter of the Earl,
And Edgar, he who claimed her as his own.

Then, crimson-curtained, died the gorgeous
day;
So came the New, so passed the Old away.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

The following verses cover a period of over forty years, most of them having appeared in previous volumes. The author has selected for this edition only those which seem to have met with especial favor,—the public, doubtless, being the best judges of what pleases them. As the most valuable (if not the most gratifying) criticism is that which indicates one's defects rather than one's merits, the author thankfully avails himself of this most wholesome censorship in the revision of these pieces, trusting that they may secure the approbation of his candid and judicious readers; though, alas! many, if not most, of those who encouraged his earlier efforts have long since passed into the eternal world.

THE CHILD-POET'S WREATH

(Sæpe pater dixit, studium quid inutile tentas?
Mæonides nullas ipse reliquit opes—
Sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,
Et quod conabar scribere, versus erat.—Ovid.)

Beside the stream a Poet-child
Sat wreathing wild-flowers day by day;
And casting them, in seeming play,
Upon the current, sweetly smiled
To see them gently float away.

And though sometimes a passing shade
May dim the lustre of his eye,
And from his trembling lips, a sigh
Breathe softly; yet, the chaplet made,
He joys to see it sailing by.

“What means this strange and lone delight—
And not unmixed with care and pain?
These pretty labors sure are vain,
Since but one moment in thy sight,
They pass, and ne’er are seen again!”

“Nay, stranger, nay; to some far land—
Some distant clime beyond the sea,
Unknown alike to you and me—
The waves may cast them on the strand,
And ev’ry flow’r a blessing be.”

“Fair child, what know’st thou of the deep—
The desolate, lone, devouring main?
Thou ne’er may’st find thy wreaths again;
And Age for wasted hours will weep,
And own this pleasing labor vain.”

“Nay, stranger, nay; on that far strand,
Some pensive soul—some lonely eye
Bedimm’d with tears, perchance may spy
A wreath half-buried in the sand,
And in surprise forget to sigh;

“For with the wreath a flood of thought
May fill the channels of his mind,
A thought with ev’ry leaf entwined,
And wisdom sweeter since unsought,
Instruct his heart to be resign’d.”

“Thou artless child, there is no soil,
No sod that doth not yield a flower;
For such the universal dower
Kind Heaven hath given to cheer our toil,
As freely as the vernal shower!”

“Aye, stranger, aye; but men do tread
Upon these lavish gifts of Love,
And know not they are from above!
They must be gather’d, wreath’d, and read
Before they may a blessing prove;

“They must be gather’d, wreath’d, and read!
They speak a language to the mind—
Or high or low, untaught, refined;—
And yet these leaves may lay outspread
In vain, be there no hand to bind.”

“No hand to bind! Where’er a flower
May bloom, there’ll be an eye to heed
Its beauty, and a mind to read
Its hidden meaning; and a power
To pluck it and to bind, if need.”

“True, stranger, true! And God to me
Hath lent that power, that eye, that mind;
And sent me forth to pluck and bind
These simple flow’rets, and to be
Their humble bearer to mankind.”

THE STRANGE OLD BARK

When the tide was low, and the evening mist
Crept down over cliff and cave,
And the sea-breeze moan'd a dirge-like song
To the mournful beat of the wave,
Arose like a spectre, silent and dark,
The mould'ring ribs of a strange old bark,
As if from an ocean grave.

'Twas a gruesome sight in the dim twilight,
As the waves came gurgling near,—
With the sea-weed strung from each rusted bolt,
Like scalps on a chieftain's spear;
And brave was the lad, when day was o'er,
Who pass'd alone by that haunted shore,
Unchill'd by a nameless fear!

How it stole the glow from my boyish cheek,
When the night was wild and dark,
To sit by the Pilot's knee and hear
Him tell of the corpses, stiff and stark,
That strewed the beach, by the billows cast!
And now, as I list to the howling blast,
I think of that strange old bark.

THE WITHERED ROSE

I came in the evening, the bud was just bursting;
 'Twas a rose in full bloom when I came the
 next morn;

At mid-day I saw it, 'twas fading and thirsting,
At evening again, but its beauty was shorn!

I looked on the turf where its petals were lying,
All sprinkled with dew-drops, but sprinkled
 too late;

I hearken'd and lo, the soft zephyr was sighing
The mournfullest requiem over its fate:

“Ah, naught can restore thee, thou sweet fallen
 flower!

The sentence pronounced against Eden of old
Denies to the dew and the sunshine the power,
Thy petals, once perish'd, again to unfold.”

And thus fall the loved in the pride of their
 bloom—

This rose is an emblem of beauty below;
The promise of morning is shrouded in gloom,
And the heart that was ardent is cold as the
 snow.

I gather'd the remnants, the fragrance they gave
Was sweet as the first breath exhaled at their
 birth;

So live the departed, though cold in the grave,
In the fond recollection of virtue and worth.

ROSES AND THORNS

I gather'd the roses;
My fingers were torn;
Full early they faded,
And left me to mourn.

Yet others are blooming
As fresh as the morn;
I sigh for their beauty,
But think of the thorn!

WARNINGS

By faith we walk, and not by sight;
And groping blindly in the night,
Abundant cause have we to thank
The tangled thorns that grow so rank
Across our path; for thus they say,
"Turn back, for you have miss'd your way!
Here Danger lurks in pitfalls deep,
In bogs and dens and chasms steep!
Turn quick, and tread the beaten track,
Where safety lies. Turn back! turn back!"

THE OLD TIMES AND THE NEW

The minstrel sat in his rustic seat
Crooning an ancient strain;
And the fragrant breath of the autumn wind
Whisper'd a soft refrain.
Over the misty mountain-side,
The shadows crept from their cave;
And the minstrel felt that over his soul
Came shadows from out the grave.

As the old man sang in his antique rhymes
Of the wonderful days of old,—
Of plumed knights and of ladies fair,
And of princes in cloth of gold,
A beautiful boy, with negligent grace,
At the minstrel's knee reclined,
And a greyhound dozed on the velvet sward—
A faithful companion and kind.

When he ceased to sing, the boy looked up
With a half-incredulous gaze;
“Yet more my grandsire, tell me more
Of your strange old dreamy days;
For I love the ring of your silver string,
And the roll of your quaint old rhymes;
But yet methinks that the bard unborn
Will sing of more wonderful times.

“For now, with fire we fight the foe,
And with lightning flash the news,
Our wagons are drawn by vapory steeds,
And the sunbeam paints our views;
And sailless barks skim over the sea,
Nor wait for the wind nor weather;
We span the main with a sensitive chain,
And bind two worlds together.”

The minstrel looked in the boy's bright eyes
With a half-incredulous gaze;
“Yet more, my son,—you may tell me more
Of your wonderful dreamy days;
For dreamy, indeed, to my sight they seem,
As my ancient days to thee!
Go fetch thy shell till I hear thee tell
Of the marvellous sights you see.”

Then hied the boy to the dim old hall,
That once was so bright and gay,
And lifting his harp from the dusty niche
That held it many a day,
He hasten'd him back to the old man's chair;
When, lo, 'twas void as the viewless air—
And minstrel and knight and ladie fair
Had faded forever away!

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

O'er Salem's consecrated land,
Night, with a soft, indulgent hand,
Spread her bespangled pall;
Throughout the vale no sound was heard,—
Naught but the ever-tuneful bird,
And distant waterfall.

There on the mountain's mossy side,
His prostrate flocks the shepherd eyed,
And oft the starry zone;
For he, while all the rest around
In slumber's silken folds were bound,
Was vigilant alone.

Familiar to his watchful eye,
Each twinkling world that roll'd on high,
And throng'd unbounded space;
He knew their time, their orb, their name,—
Each dazzling group, each varied flame,—
And could their wanderings trace.

'Twas in the loneliest hour of night,
A wand'ring star divinely bright,
To him unknown, he saw!
With mute perplexity he gazed;
For, as it moved, it brighter blazed—
Unruled by stellar law!

And others saw that stranger-star,
And, wond'ring, gather'd from afar,
 With looks of terror pale,
When sudden brilliance o'er them shone,
As if the star a sun had grown,
 And flooded all the vale!

All prostrate on the dewy ground,
The helpless shepherds fell around—
 O'erawed by terror sore;
While heavenly minstrelsy was heard,
And lo, the Angel of the Lord
 These joyful tidings bore:

“Glory to God on high be given,
The Sov'reign Lord of earth and heaven!
 Glad tidings do we bring!
Peace—good-will to men on earth;
In David's house a glorious birth—
 Your Saviour and your King!”

Then heavenward wing'd that angel fair,
While countless myriads fill'd the air
 Throughout unbounded space;
And as they faded from the view,
Old things had passed, and all was new—
 New Law, new Priest, new Grace.

THE EVE OF THE GOLDEN WEDDING

WIFE

Oh, sing me the songs you used to sing
When our love was in its May;
And tell me the tales you used to tell,
As we wandered down by Willow Well,
At close of the summer day!

Those sweet little songs that I loved to hear—
So “old and yet ever new;”
And the tales that pictured a perfect life,
Wherein I was still “the fair young wife,”
And “the happy husband” you.

When your eye was bright and your cheek was
smooth,
And your step was light and free;
And your locks—so scant and snowy now—
In clusters brown fell over your brow,
That was ever a joy to me.

For tomorrow, dear, 's our wedding-day;
And 'tis fifty years tonight,
Since you oped that box with trembling care
And showed me a something nestling there
Like a fairy circlet of light!

Then sing once more the songs that you sang
When our love was in its May,
And tell me the tales you used to tell
As we wandered down by Willow Well,
At close of the summer day.

HUSBAND

Ah, wife, to sing as I used to sing
And tell you the tales of then,
Give the cheek as smooth and the eye as bright,
The step as free and the heart as light,
And the clust'ring curls again!

Give the dazzling hopes that lured us on,
Like marsh-lights in the dark,
Give "Love's Retreat" and the fields of wheat,
The Willow Well where we used to meet,
And the winding walk through the park.

What! fifty years? Why, it scarce seems ten
Since I held your hand that night
And fitted the ring! But I think you're wrong
To say I trembled, for then was I strong;
But I mind how it twinkled in the light.

No, it scarce seems ten! I remember well
That eve of our wedding-day!
And only to think—full fifty years
Of shade and shine, of joys and cares
Have pass'd like a dream away!

Aye, pass'd like a dream in the night; but where
Are the loved ones, bright and gay,
Who gathered around us—Willie and Lu,
Harry and Jane, and Jerry and Sue—
On the eve of that festive day!

Gone—all are gone this many a year
To that fairer world on high!
Gone to the land of the silent dead;
And ev'ry leaf of the tree is shed,
Save the two wither'd ones—you and I!

So, wife, to sing you the songs I sang
When our love was in its May,
You must wait till we join the choir above,
In the Land of endless Life and Love,
On our heavenly wedding-day!

THE EAGLE-EYED

Whither hast thou lately wander'd,
Child of eagle-eye,—
Through the earth or softly floated
'Mong the clouds on high?
Tell us where thy flight has been,
What thy searching sight hath seen.
“Yes; beyond the cloudland's height,
Have I wing'd my airy flight—
Basking in th' ethereal glow
Watching earth that roll'd below.
From my lofty resting-place,
I beheld the human race
Toss'd like weeds upon the ocean—
Torn and whirl'd in wild commotion;
Dark clouds o'er them rolling, heaping,
With a murmur as of weeping,
Banners streaming, war-steel gleaming—
Much of mediæval dreaming,
In this fact-extolling age;
Heavenly Truth neglected, beaming
Dimly, as if men were deeming
But a myth the inspired Page!”

Happy, happy creature, thou,
Gifted thus to see
All the multitudes of earth—
From their evils free.

“Nay, alas! Think not that I
Who inhabit earth or sky,
Just as fancy bids me go,
Have not, too, my share of woe—
Feel not all the stress and strain,
All the weariness and pain,

All the anguish mortals know!
Not because, with eye serene,
I survey the varied scene,
Am I but a thoughtless child,
Ever placid, calm, and mild.
There 's a mirror in my breast,
Pictures true this wild unrest;
So yon cloud's complacent form
May be pregnant with a storm,
Yet it sails that azure sea
Like an angel-argosy.
Can I see, and seeing, feel
Naught of human woe and weal?
Hard indeed must be the heart
That has never felt the smart!
But 'tis madness to complain—
Madness, when all search is vain—
When to solve th' eternal Why?
Gabriel knows 'twere vain to try!
Much less creatures space-ward hurl'd—
Tenants of an unknown world;
Travelling onward dark and lone,
To a world still more unknown!
Thus I've school'd my soul to trust
In the wisdom of the Just,
In the mercy of the Might,
In the triumph of the Right!

BOYHOOD'S MEMORIES

There is a fair lake in a far-off isle,
Among the piney ridges, by whose marge
My boyhood loved to wander and beguile
The sunny hours. I launch'd my tiny barge
Upon its rippling breast, and watch'd it glide
Before the breeze—sometimes o'erborne and
toss'd
With ruder wavelets, soon again to ride
Triumphant; so 'twould float, till in the distance lost.

Lost and forgotten, till some other morn
Would lure my footsteps to that pebbly strand;
When, lo, my little bark!—its sails all torn—
A mimic wreck, half-buried in the sand.
How would I grasp it, kiss it, call it "pet!"
And careful wash the gather'd weeds and slime
From off its side!
Oh, yet, fond Mem'ry, yet,
Thou lov'st to find those wrecks along the shores
of Time!

THE SAILOR-BOY AND THE BIRD OF PASSAGE

"Fly, little wanderer,
Fly to my breast!
Why hast thou wing'd so far,
Heedless of rest?
Why did'st thou leave the land,
Joyous and bright,
Tempting the ruthless wave,
Ever a yawning grave,
Gloomy as night?

" 'Tis in the sunny vale
Where thou should'st be,
Trilling thy song of love;
Not on the sea.
Come, little wanderer,
Come to my breast;
Thou shalt return to thy
Leaf-cover'd nest!"

Thrice did the wanderer
Wheel 'round the mast;
Wheeling, her song was heard
Like a celestial bird,
Sweet in the blast:
"Though I have flown so far,"
(This was her song),
"Tempting the yawning wave;
Still am I strong;
For there is One above
Who, in his tender love,
Careth for me,
And, with unerring hand,
Guides me from land to land,
Safe o'er the sea."

THE STARS

Come forth, ye orbs of light!
I bless your gentle rays,
For the sweet memories they bring
Of other days.

For ye are still the same—
Bright, beautiful, and mild—
As full of wonder to me now
As when a child!

Earth's flow'rets fade and die;
Life's but a fickle flame;
All—all we love decay; but ye
Are still the same.

I bless ye for the true
Companionship I find,
In the fond picturings of the past
Ye call to mind.

Once more each well-known scene—
Each valley, wood, and stream,
And ev'ry haunt my childhood loved
Comes like a dream!

Comes with the hours when we,
In speculation deep,
Did hold ye were the glittering tears
That angels weep;

For on each flow'r next morn,
Did not the pearl-drop stand,
That fell in noiseless showers by night
O'er all the land?

And now, though we may smile
At childhood's simple lore,
With all the knowledge we have gain'd,
What know we more!

DEATH AND THE WOODMAN

"I'm weary of living," the woodman groan'd,
As he stagger'd along the road.
"For the sake of a miserable crust of bread,
I'd rather a thousand times be dead
Than carry this wearysome load!

"Come Death! Come Death!" and down he
dropp'd
Upon his faggot of wood,—
"Come Death and ease me of toil and want!"
And straight a skeleton grim and gaunt
Beside the old man stood.

"Well, what do you want?" the spectre ask'd;
"For I heard you just complain
Of your heavy load." With a ghastly face,
The man replied, "I want you to place
This load on my shoulder again."

FRIENDLESS

(A young man, dying in a city lodging-house, declared that he had no friend in the world.)

He said he had no friend! He was alone—

A waif—a fallen leaf,—a wand'ring star;
At home a stranger, and abroad unknown;
Dwelling with men, and yet from men afar!

Day after day he mingled with the crowd,—

Men marked him not, nor shared with him
his woe,

Though fair, though young, by cares untimely
bow'd,

Till life's chill'd currents scarcely seem'd to
flow.

Faint smiles would sometimes light his pale,
thin cheek,

Like moonbeams falling on a lonely tomb,—
More sad than tears,—they only served to speak
Of buried hopes within, and rayless gloom.

Day after day he wander'd, mute and sad,—

Friend greeting friend, and love's warm welcome heard;

But not for him, since friend he never had
To cheer his heart with one consoling word!

No father hastes to fold him to his breast;
His griefs, no mother's sympathies allay;
He came—no household joy his advent bless'd,
Nor any mourn'd him when he pass'd away.

Oh, can it be that thou could'st find, fair youth,
No flame congenial with thine own to burn—
No eye to pity, and no tongue to soothe,
No hand to wreathe thy solitary urn!

LIFE'S RECORD

Smiles and blushes and sighs and tears
Write the record of human years;
And all our sorrows and joys and cares,
Gains and losses and hopes and fears
Fade in smiles and sighs and tears!

CLARIBEL

(A lovely young girl who was drowned while bathing in the surf.)

No fairer form than Claribel did nature ever
mould,
With her sunny eyes of azure and her wavy locks
of gold;
So heavenly fair, this radiant maid might charm
a cherub's eyes—
Nay, she seem'd a pilgrim-spirit just alighted
from the skies!

Now Claribel was wont to stray beneath deep-
shady bowers,
Where the wild birds warble love-notes and the
zephyrs fan the flowers;
And oft to gather silver shells that Ocean's
bounty gave,
And press her glowing bosom to the bosom of
the wave.

One rosy morning found her where the sea-
nymphs love to keep
Their wild, fantastic revels on the surface of the
deep;
When up from coral caves they come—an airy,
fairy band—
To lead their mazy dance along the unfrequented
strand;

While others in their scallop-shells in graceful
freedom glide,
With dishevell'd tresses streaming down like
amber on the tide.
Around them sport the nautilus and creatures
strange and rare,
While soft Æolian murmurs seem to tremble in
the air.

But all that strikes fair Clara, where her listless
glances stray,
Are the rainbow-tinted morning-beams that o'er
the waters play.
Then casting off her silken robe, she glides the
waves among,
And mingles, all unconscious, with the nymphs
that round her throng.

All hand-in-hand, in circle link'd, they gaze with
jealous eyes,
On her free and fearless gambols with the bil-
lows as they rise;
And they love her for her beauty, though invad-
ing their domain;
But the bowers and the flowers, she shall never
see again!

For round about her graceful form, their view-
less arms they weave,
While slumber steals her senses as the rocking
billows heave;
Then, sinking down together to their oozy
ocean halls,
The great deep closes over her for aye its crystal
walls!

A SUMMER MORNING

Morn woos thee, Psyche, with his rosy lips
And warm, love-lighted glances. Let us forth
And pluck the earliest flow'rs for sacrifice—
Breathe the fresh gale, and banquet on the feast
Of loveliness. The lily looks for thee;
Let not the rose-bud languish for thy care,
Nor violet complain thy tardy steps.
They wait for thee as maidens for the bride,—
All tremulous with sympathetic joy,
And radiant each with coronals of dew.
Be thou not slow to greet them and to swing
With them thy censer of sweet praise.
O'er the still foliage pours the golden Day
Through purple vapors, like a billow borne
From some aerial sea, and on the cliffs
Of these tall trees, in iridescent showers,
Breaks into sparkling spray. Heaven smiles
serene

On Earth which, like a beauteous babe, looks up
With eyes of loving confidence and joy.
The music which we hear of bird and bee,
Of rill and whispering wind, is Nature's own—
The oldest melody—the first that e'er
Our sinless parents heard in Paradise,—
The last before that Paradise was lost,—
And so brings Paradise to us again!

MEMORY

O Memory! thou art a sacred thing—
Thy mission holy. Thou art to our souls
A monitress—a messenger of good!
When on the border-land of Doubt or e'en
Full enter'd on the perilous path of Wrong,—
And deaf to all but one enticing voice,
'Tis then we hear thy warning—feel the touch
Of thy benignant hand—perhaps some word
A dying mother whisper'd years ago—
Some long-forgotten counsel of a sire,
Himself well-nigh forgotten—some warm tear
Dropp'd from a sister's eyelid on the hand
That press'd the last embraces—some deep gaze
Of a neglected love—some passion-vow,
Long broken ruthlessly—some word, some
glance,
Some prayer, some tear, some token, scene, or
thought,
O Memory, thou bringest to the heart
Direct, arresting its mad bounds, and back
To hope and home the prodigal restore!

DAY-DREAMS

Life were but a weary burden,
If without our dreams;
These are of the curtain'd Future,
First faint gleams;
When the spirit—chain'd and chamber'd
In her house of clay—
Catches through the dungeon-window
Morn's glad ray.

Like a messenger from Heaven
Singing at your gate,
"Weep not, captive—earth still smileth—
Pray, hope, wait!
Though all beauty be excluded,
I am come to thee,
Whisp'ring, what thy warm heart loveth,
Thou'lt yet see."

LIFE

They know not life,
Who feel no yearnings for the life beyond;
For fadeless fields—for fruit that ripens not
In solar rays—for streams that have their source
Deep hidden in creation's sacred heart!
They know not life to whom earth's myriad
flow'rs
Are not as sisters fair, yon stars their friends,
And the wide universe their heritage.
Alas! they know not life to whom this life
Is all in all, and death a dreamless sleep!
Ah no! they know not life, who in their souls
Feel not the power of the life to come.

ONE SONG FOR THEE

One song for thee before I rest,
One prayer for thee before I sleep;
May slumber bring thee visions blest,
And angels round thee vigils keep!
My love, my last thoughts are of thee,
My first with day's first rosy beams;
Nor doth the night deny the light
Of thy sweet eyes in all my dreams.

One lonely star from out the deep,
With gentle ray, doth on me shine;
I bless kind Heaven by whom 'tis given—
For, lovely one, that star is thine!
This song for thee before I rest,
This prayer for thee before I sleep:
While slumber folds thee to her breast
May angels ceaseless vigils keep!

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Listen, brother,—pause and listen!
Hear you not, I pray,
Murmurs like a mighty tocsin
Swinging far away,—
Slow and solemn, “Coming! Coming!”
Nearer day by day?

Over all the din and clangor
Of this life around,—
Rush of travel, roar of traffic,—
That our ears confound;
Tolling—tolling, deep and awful,
Swells the solemn sound!

Oh, that mystic Something coming,—
Earth has never known!
When, or how, or what its mission,
Is with Him alone;
But the soul, devoutly list’ning,
Hears the monotone.

Is it some all-potent Besom
That shall sweep away
Ev’ry idol that we worship,
Counsel we obey,—
All the dust and dross of ages—
From the light of day?

Who may tell? But fear you never—
You that love the Right;
Tremble, traitor! tremble, tyrant,
Cow’ring in the night;
Soon shall flash and flame around you
God’s eternal Light!

THE MOAN OF HUMANITY

Peace! Are you dreaming of peace?
'Tis found alone in the grave;
For the battle with Wrong will never cease,
While there is a soul to save!

The ocean is salt with tears,
The wind is humanity's moan,
The earth is the dust of a million years,
And the heart of Fate is a stone!

FREEDOM'S MARTYRS

I see a river that slowly moves
Along a valley deep and wide,—
The ghastly light of the clouded moon
But half-reveals the mighty tide!
What seems the wail of a funeral march
From out of the current faintly comes,
With a measured beat, like countless feet,
Timed to the roll of muffled drums.

"Look, mortal, look!" said a tongue unseen,—
"Fear not, but look, and thou shalt know."
I gaze in awe, for the serried ranks
Of men in myriads march below.
Oh, such a river! And who or what?
"A phantom host," the Voice replied,—
"The shadowy files of martyr'd men
Who once for Freedom fought and died!"

“KILLED AND WOUNDED”

As I pick up the paper that comes with night
And open the sheet with an eager hand
To read the record of every land,
The very first line that catches my sight,
Heading a column that reeks with gore,—
The same old story of years before,
When martial deeds my bosom thrill'd,—
Is “Killed and Wounded—Wounded and
Killed.”

Killed and wounded—wounded and killed!
A marshal, a colonel, a captain falls
'Mid clash of swords and whistle of balls,
And a nation mourns the blood that is spill'd;
The proud mausoleum lifts its head
O'er the turf where the gore of “the great” is
shed;
The cypress waves its classical bough,
And the laurel wreaths the marble brow.

Killed and wounded—wounded and killed!
The blood of “a man in the ranks” is shed—
One of the brave “unknown” is dead;
And who 's to heed the heart that is chill'd?
What monument marks the place of his rest?
The sod that covers his patriot breast
Bears one poor blossom whose sickly bloom
Drearily marks the nameless tomb.

Killed and wounded for glory and fame!
And a friendless female, weak and wan,
Tremblingly asks the newspaper man
If Death's grim roll shows her "William's" name.
He scans the list with careless eyes,
"Yes; he is dead." "My God!" she cries;
And wildly-hysteric, they bear her away
To feed on her grief from day to day.

And all alone in her widow's weeds,
She thinks of her dead one day and night;
She sees him fall in the thick of the fight,
And a terrible gash in his bosom bleeds!
At last her brain begins to swim,
Her mind grows dark, her memory dim,
And ever by bleeding forms surrounded,
She's vacantly mutt'ring, "Killed and
Wounded."

The sweet little cot in the shade of the trees,—
With roses and jessamines twining above,—
Where William and she did live and love,
And welcome their guests, the birds and the bees,
Is vacant now; the leaves are shed,
The flowers are wither'd, the birds have fled;
The zephyrs come as they did of yore,
Only to sigh at the moss-barr'd door;
But often at night, when all is still'd,
A voice seems whispering, "Wounded and
Killed."

“THAT HOME IN THE WEST”

Weary and worn from the terrible strife,
Bleeding and bruised, on the field they lie—
Mourning the loss of their brothers and sons,
Seeing no hope on the morrow for rest,
Only for War, with the bitterest hate,
Only for murder, oppression, and wrong,
Only for desolate hearthstones and hearts,
Only for little ones pleading in vain!

So, as they bind up their wounds, they lament:
“Is there no land where the nations may live
Save as the ravenous beasts of the field?
Must we forever devour and kill—
Kill and devour each other like beasts?
Is there no region where Reason directs?
Is there no lodgement with mortals for Love?
Is there no foothold for Peace on the earth?

“Since the first pair from the Garden were driven,
Since the first blood of a brother was shed—
Bloodshed is ever the rule of all nations,
Warfare the noblest business of man;
Wading through blood to the goal of his lust,
Drenching the world in a deluge of gore,
Conquest and spoilage, rapine and force—
War through all ages from sire to son!”

Thus, as they bind up their wounds, they lament,
Thus they deplore the long annals of strife,
Seeing no change to the end of the world—
Nothing but War, with the victor supreme—
Victor anointed the ruler of men;
Hewing his way with his sword to the throne;
Wiping his blade with a satisfied smile,
Scorning the rabble that crouch at his feet!

Cries out a watcher: "Oh, look toward the sunset!

See the bright vision that rises to view!

What but the fabled Utopia revealing!

What but the promised New Eden at last!

What but the dwelling of creatures exalted—

Almost angelic in body and soul!

What but a country where Justice and Reason,
Friendship and Harmony ever prevail!

"Yes, 'tis the Westland! yes, 'tis the best land—

Refuge from strife and oppression and wrong;

Warfare abandoned, Peace like a river

Flowing forever unruffled and calm!"

So, to the weary and worn of the Orient—

Longing to rid them of bondage and strife—

Breaks through the clouds the bright vision of
sunset,

Glitter the peaks of that Home in the West!

Wounds disregarding, all of them standing—

Gazing delightedly over the wave,

Singing, "Oh, brother, there's hope in the sun-
set—

Hope for the down-trodden races of earth!

Yonder's the Home that our fathers were prom-
ised—

Yonder the Land where they live but to love!"

Thus in their rapture, forgetting their bruises,

Over the billows they blissfully gaze.

Lo, while they gaze, a dark spectre arises,

Rolling like smoke from the pit of despair,—

Awfully lurid with flashes of lightning,

Like a fierce battle beheld from afar!

"What!" in amazement they cry, "Is it blood-
shed!

What! is it strife in that Eden of Peace!
Yes, it is war!" And they pick up their weapons,
Sighing, "Alas, it was only a dream—
Only a phantom—that City of Refuge—
Only a promise—that Home in the West!"

GRETCHEN

(An incident of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.)

"Gretchen! Gretchen! run, my daughter—
A wounded Frenchman 's down by the wall!"
"Mother, and why should I run to a Frenchman,
Save to give him a pistol-ball!"
"Gretchen, Gretchen, think of thy brother
Following Fritz so far away!"
"Mother, I hope he 's making the Frenchmen
Dance to the roll of his drum today!"
"Aye; but Gret, suppose he is fainting—
Famishing, down by a Frenchman's wall!"
"Mother, O Mother! and hear'st thou nobody
Feebly, 'Gretchen, Gretchen!' call?"
"Nobody, child; but I hear the breezes
Murmuring round our empty hall."
"Mother, I'll run to the wounded Frenchman
Fainting—famishing, down by the wall!"

THE MESSENGER OF PEACE

“Peace! Peace! Peace!”

O God! are the tidings true,
Or is it a dream that gives increase
To misery’s deep’ning hue?
But hark! Oh, hark! Again and again—
The boom of the signal gun;
And a mingled roar like a distant main
Goes up with the rising sun!

The breezes whisper of love,
And the clouds like virgins lave
In the golden flood, as the white-winged
dove
Comes breasting it over the wave.
She’s seen—she’s seen—that messenger fair,
From mountain, valley, and plain;
And heads long bow’d in dumb despair,
Look upward with hope again.

To haunts of lonely woe—
To pillows bedew’d with tears—
Speed on and bid the chill’d hearts glow,
And the timid forget their fears;
Go, tell them the battle is o’er,
And give to the watch-worn rest;
To the loved ones speak that they weep no
more
In young Love’s rifled nest.

Rejoice, ye souls that prize
Not Victory's perishing crown;
But that which drew from the bending skies,
A pitying Godhead down—
"Peace—peace—peace!"
Sweet words by angels sung!
Then speed, O Dove, with thy message, nor
cease
Till echoed by every tongue!

THE RIVER—AN ODE

Dark hulls of ships and slimy wharves the turbid
river laves,
And round and through the city pours her mel-
ancholy waves.
Oh, ravished River, free nor pure thy tide shall
ever be,
Now Mammon with his sooty swarm hath
claim'd and fetter'd thee!
'Tis thine to own the tyrant power that earth
and ocean seals,
To bear his burden on thy breast, and whirl his
million wheels.
He curbs thee round with stake and stone, and
chains thee o'er and o'er,
And bids thee crouch beneath his hand, a slave
forevermore!

Once how beautiful and bright,
Did she mingle with the main,—
Dancing, leaping in delight,
Like a wand'rer home again!
Gaily dimpling through her channels,
Misty years that reason mock—
Years that have no other annals
Than her writing on the rock.
Now, her youthful beauty fled,
Flows she loveless, joyless, dead!

Harken! Seem we not to hear,
Through her sobbings, far and near,
Pleading murmurs soft and clear?—

“Know me, ere you judge me so!
Walk beside me as I flow,
Up beyond the city streets,
Up beyond the wharves and fleets,
Up beyond the bridge, and see
Where I still am pure and free.
Come and see me gush and glide—
With a gently-flowing tide,
In my stainless maiden-pride—
Through the meadows green and gay,
Where the blithesome children play,
And their fair limbs dip and lave
In my cool, refreshing wave.
By the clover-perfumed mead,
Where the calm-eyed cattle feed;
Past the willows, round the hill,
By the old deserted mill;
'Neath the hollow, crumbling bank,
Where the grass grows long and rank,
With a fragrance in the air,
As of lilies lurking near;
Where wide branches cast their shade
Over many a mossy glade
Which for Love alone were made;
By that fairy-haunted spot
Where the coy forget-me-not,
Trembling o'er the crystal flood,
Tempt you with its tiny bud.
Come up farther, where I dally
With the tall reeds in the valley,
And among them gleam and glisten,
'Till you think I cease to flow;
But you'll hear me, if you listen,
Murmur songs the lilies know—
Murmur, whimple, gurgle, babble
Liquid lays the lilies know!

Upward to the deep, dark basin
Border'd round with tufty sod,
Where the swallow dips her pinion,
And the angler trails his rod.

Yet farther along,
Where the valley grows narrow,
I flash like the lightning,
I shoot like an arrow!
Ha! ha! and I shout
In the freedom I love;
While the clouds grow amazed
As they cluster above!
When roaring in thunder,
The wild leap I take,
The giant trees wonder
And tremble and quake;
But as I rush past them,
I fling in my play,
O'er branches low-bending,
A wreath of my spray;
And then my sun-lover,
With cheek all aglow,
Doth gaze with such ardor,
I blush him a bow!

Now upward and onward you toil by my side,
Till the great hoary mountains are seen;
Through ages and ages and ages, my tide
Hath scoop'd out that fearful ravine!
Then plunge in the forest primeval whose sod
The foot of no venturesome pilgrim hath trod;
But where, by the gleam of the stars, you may see
The soft-stealing panther come gliding to me,

Or the deer from her covert stoop over and
shrink

From her shade in my depths as she pauses to
drink.

Still forward you struggle—the forest is pass'd;
My own native mountain lifts proudly at last—
My own native mountain, whose peak is a throne
Where reigns the Ice-Monarch eternal and lone,
Who dreams not of earth at his measureless
height,

But holds with the planets communion of light!
And now you may rest by my cool cavern-door,
As you hear the drip, drip—drip, drip on the
floor.

Through shadows you peer, and the dank breath
inhale,

Where the spectres of ages stand silent and pale.
No farther! Beyond, in the womb of the Earth,
Where coy rubies blush, is the place of my
birth—

Where diamonds sparkle, and silver and gold,
In mansions of beauty, 'mid marvels untold!"

Flow on, queenly River,
While mountains endure,—
As bounteous and pure
As Nature, the Giver!
Roll down to the sea
In thy far-winding way;
From tincture of clay,
Thy spirit is free—
And forever will rise,
In vesture of white,
To bathe in the light
Of the sapphire skies!

MY HILLS

You may have your gilded halls,
You may have your shows and balls—
All within your city walls;
 Only let me have my hills—
 My lone and silent hills,
Where Nature, in my sight,
 Pours ever out and fills
Her chalice with delight!
 Whisp'ring all the while,
 With a winsome smile,
Such promise in mine ear
As mortals seldom hear.
 For here no chancel-rail,
 No jealous screen or veil
Divides me from my God;
But on this mossy sod—
 With the blue dome above
And the green sward below—
I see, I hear, I know,
 I feel that God is Love!

APRIL

I see the white wreaths dwindle down
 To little mounds of icy mire;
I see the hillsides bare and brown,
 The swelling buds upon the brier;
I see in many a sunny spot
 The tender spears of verdure rise;
I see young Spring return,—but not
 The form that ravish'd once mine eyes.

I hear the bluebird's cheery call;
 The thrush in yonder bosky grove;
I hear the freed brook's murmuring fall;
 I hear the cooing of the dove;
I hear the patt'ring on the pane,
 The distant thunder on the shore;
I hear the voice of Spring again,—
 But her sweet accents nevermore!

I feel the warm winds freshly blow
 Athwart the fields that still retain
Some trace of last year's wealth and glow
 Through winter's storm and autumn's rain;
I feel the pulse of Nature bound
 Beneath my foot where'er I tread;
But neither touch, nor sight, nor sound
 Can give me back my sainted Dead!

A CLOUDY JUNE

What ails thee, June, that thou dost pout and frown,

And darkly moan in melancholy songs,—
Bearing upon thy brows a cloudy crown,

And not the rose-wreath that to thee belongs?
With folded hands, pale cheek, and downcast eyes,

Thou comest a Niobe, all tears and sighs!

In thy young sister April, we expect

Such wayward ways, for she is in her teens;
But seen in thee, who art the bride-elect,

In sooth, we know not what such conduct means,

Thus to withhold so pettishly thy boon,
Though rich and rare thy promise, lovely June!

Long have we waited for thy warm embrace,

And bravely battled through the wintry way;
In expectation kiss'd thy glowing face,

While hope illumined many a sunless day,—
O'er howling storms, we heard thy sweet notes gush,

And 'neath the snows beheld thy roses blush.

Now here at last, thou bride-month of the year,

Thy face we see; but how unlike our dreams!
Since not in wedding-robcs dost thou appear,

Nor from thy azure eyes the love-light gleams;
In sable weeds—a sad, funereal train—

Thou movest with all thy days athwart the plain.

Oh, virgin June! yet deign awhile to shine;
For tireless Time is ever on the move.
But thirty days of all the year are thine;
Then, should not each be over-fill'd with
love,—

In shady groves, deep dells, and forest bowers,
Bedight with garlands gay of blushing flowers?

On far-off lakes with islets studded o'er,
By flood and field and breezy mountain-steep,
Or where green billows dash upon the shore,
Or spectral ice-bergs gleam along the deep;
Or, stretch'd supine beneath ancestral trees,
By babbling brooklets lull'd and murmuring
bees.

Like all that we have cherish'd, soon wilt thou
Fade out and mingle with the dreamy past;
The canker wastes thy glory even now;
For earthly joys were never meant to last!
But come;—the meed of "rarest days" you know,
To thee is given; then smile, and prove it so.

“HOME LIFE”

Home life—what meaning in the name!

What varied thoughts the memory greet!
For not to all is home the same,
And not to every mortal sweet.

Home life should be a life of joy,
A life of purity and truth,
A life of love without alloy,
Of reverend age and pious youth.

For as the home, the child we see;
And as the child, shall be the man;
And as the man, the State must be—
As good or bad, home life began.

A PRAYER FOR RAIN

Oh, for rain—for gentle rain—
For the sweet, refreshing rain—
For the dripping, pattering, rushing, gush-
ing rain,

Let us pray!

Oh, to wake up in the night
To the music of the rain—
To its plashing and its dashing
On the hot and dusty pane!
And to listen to the showers
Through the long and sultry hours
Come and go;

And to know

That the faithful little flowers
Did not lift their pleading eyes
To the brazen, burning skies
All in vain!

And to know that in the valley,
In the forest, on the plain,
Are a thousand, thousand famish'd things
Rejoicing in the rain!

That the meadows will be seen
In their livery of green,
As though fair May awhile
Had come again to smile;
That no more the shrunken river
O'er its rocky bed is creeping;
But with laughing eddies dimpled,
To its mother-wave is leaping!
And to know this happy night
There are hearts of humble trust
Adoring Him who raineth
On the evil and the just;
While from many a grateful eye,
Are the tears of blessing shed
On little lips that whisper'd last,
"Our Father . . . daily bread!"
And to know that on the morrow,
With the first flush of the day,
What a cloud of anxious sorrow,
With the clouds will pass away!
For the rain, the gentle rain,
The sweet, refreshing rain,
The gushing, rushing, pattering, dripping
rain,
Let us pray!

TO A CAPTIVE SEAL

(In Frog Pond, Boston Common, September, 1865.)

Lone captive of the hyperborean main!

Not without pity can I gaze on thee,
And watch thy graceful motions as in vain
Thou seek'st thy fellows of the surging sea.

How strange to those large, liquid eyes of thine
Must seem these grassy lawns and waving
trees;

This lakelet, so unlike thy native brine,
Thus gently ruffled with th' autumnal breeze!

Dost thou not yearn to hear the Norther blow,
And o'er the cold green billows sweep and
howl,—

Where ice-fields whiten with the driving snow,
And the huge mountains roll and grind and
growl?

Good to thy heart amphibious must it seem
To have Night's curtain drawn the welkin o'er,
When, undisturb'd, thou canst repose and dream
Of Baffin's Bay and lonely Labrador;

Or when, if wakeful, thou may'st recognize
Thy stellar friends, Orion and the Bear,
And sometimes boreal lights, which, in our skies
Must seem poor ghosts of what in yours appear.

E'en as I gaze on thee, methinks I hear
The thund'ring billows and the grinding floes,
And see the cliffs their flinty foreheads rear,
Obscure and awful through the blinding
snows;

For I have view'd thy kindred of the main
Disporting freely on their native strand—
In myriads dark'ning all the icy plain,
Along the stormy shores of Newfoundland.

Thou art no traitor to thy home and kind,
No willing trespasser on man's domain,
That thou in durance vile should'st be confined;
I would, poor cousin, thou wert free again!

“NOTHING NOW TO SING”

Oh, tell us not, young minstrel—
With thy harp of silent string,
And thy hope-forsaken visage—
That “there ’s nothing now to sing.”
While a blue sky bends above thee,
And a heart is left to love thee,
Oh, tell us not, young minstrel, that there ’s
nothing now to sing!

At the awful shrines of Nature
Has thy rev’rent spirit bow’d?
Have you seen the deep in tempest
And the mountain through the cloud?
Have you felt your heart’s quick paces
In the lone and silent places,—
And beats it but to murmur, “There is nothing
now to sing”?

Is there nothing great, heroic—
Nothing noble in thy kind?
Is the soul without her pinions,
Or the body without mind?
Is no pleading voice to move thee,
And no worthy cause to prove thee?
Oh, think before you murmur, “There is nothing
now to sing!”

Who crown the Past forever
In her halo-circled state,
Save the souls that battled bravely
In the strife that made them great?
And all the thrilling story
Of their greatness and their glory
Is but the very prelude of the songs that you
may sing!

Then, deem not thine as useless
As a taper in the day;
Be it true to what is truthful
It may never pass away!
For what the golden tissue
Of the ages, but the issue
Of minds the world thought dreaming when they
never ceased to sing?

One sang for fame and glory,
One for Truth and Heaven above,
One sang for light and freedom,
One for beauty and for love;
Each at first the world's derision,
Till the years unseal'd the vision,
When they're now amongst the angels for the
songs that they did sing.

SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

Sow thy seed, O husbandman!
Sow thy seed and sleep;
It will burst the shell and rise,
Sip the dew and kiss the skies;
Other hands will reap.

In thy labor thou shalt live,
When thy hands are still;
Ne'er shall cease the sun and rain,
Never fail the golden grain,
All our needs to fill.

THE EPIPHANY

Bring gold, for a Monarch is born
In David and Solomon's line;
Bring myrrh for the sorrow and scorn,
Bring incense, for He is divine.

He comes, and the heavens unfold,
He comes in humanity's clay,—
The Saviour by prophets foretold,—
Jehovah is with us today!

He comes, and the shadows depart
From all the dark regions around;
He comes, and each jubilant heart
With songs of salvation resound!

THE CHILD JESUS

“Yea, daughter,” said the Rabbi, casting off
His gaberdine, “the Council hath sat late,
But not without good reason; for, in sooth,
There came to us a wondrous visitant,
The which, if I did worship as the Greeks,
I should believe a god in human form.
For while we sat debating as to when
Messiah should appear, there came a child—
A twelve-year boy, with large and lustrous eyes
Which he did fasten on us with a gaze
So deep and searching that he held us mute,
When he did question us in such a wise,
Of Law and Prophecy, as never man,
Much less a child, till then. But soon there came
A woman up to him, and stooping, said,
‘Why hast thou, oh my son, thus dealt with us?
Behold thy father and myself have sought
Thee sorrowing.’ Whereat the lad replied,
‘How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not
That I must be about my father’s work?’
The woman said no more, but took his hand
And turning, led him silently away.
Now mark me, daughter,—if this be a child
Of mortal mould,—as doth indeed appear,—
The world will surely hear of him some day.”

"BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE"

'Tis well, in Heaven's appointed plan,
We sometimes fail to grasp the prize
For which we seek with eager eyes;
It is the search that makes the man.

Success through failure oft is found;
Had we but reach'd the goal we sought,
Or done the brilliant deed we thought,
Should we now hold this vantage-ground?

The little slip, the small delay
That brought us panting to the strand,
With bag and baggage in our hand,
To see the vessel sail away!

The chance we miss'd by just a hair,
That makes us mourn our luckless fate,
And smite the breast, and cry, "Too late!"
How deep it plunged us in despair!

But, by-and-by, when Rumor's wing
Wafts back the tidings that no more
The fated bark shall greet the shore,—
How grateful then the songs we sing!

OUR NATIONAL VISITORS

(To the Columbian Exposition, 1893.)

They will drift in countless thousands with the
four winds of the sky;

They will come from all the nations of the
earth;

They will throng our towns and cities with a
criticizing eye,
And will measure us for all that we are worth.

They will skirt our trackless forests, and our
rugged mountains scale;

They will sweep across our prairies far and
wide;

They will thread our awful canyons, and our in-
land oceans sail,
And our rivers rolling grandly to the tide!

They will view our farms and orchards and our
ranches by the mile,

And our corn-fields whence a hungry world is
fed;

They will scan our vast resources, in a land
whereon the smile

Of the Maker seems forever to be shed.

They will note our crust of culture on our crude-
ness great and grand,

And our manners and our morals they will
gauge;

They will see our race for riches and our push
on ev'ry hand,

And our progress with the spirit of the age.

But can we show the nations how we've left them
all behind

In the things that make for righteousness and
truth?

With the vigor of young manhood, both in
muscle and in mind,

Can we also claim the innocence of youth?

Have we beat our warlike weapons into imple-
ments of use?

Are our ships the white-wing'd messengers of
peace?

Have we righted ev'ry evil and abolish'd each
abuse,

And from prejudice and hatred gain'd release?

Is our heel upon the bigot with his mediæval
creed?

And is superstition driven from the land?

Is our world-commended Commonwealth re-
publican indeed?

And does every man on equal footing stand?

Has the New World nothing nobler for our visi-
tors to view

Than a rude, colossal copy of the Old?

Is the deity we worship as the only good and
true,

Still the universal potentate of Gold?

If so, alas! 'twere wiser we should hide ourselves
away

In the ashes of humility and shame,

Than reveal our disproportions, in the searching
light of day,

To a World that only knows us now in name!

THE RED MAN'S DEFIANCE

We must vanish, so you warn us, like the snow-
flakes in the sun,—

Like the wither'd leaves that never bloom
again,—

That our destiny has ended, and our race is
nearly run;

For the pale-face must be master of the plain!

That with the bear and bison, we must perish
from the soil,

Which is needed for your railway and your
plough,—

Our rivers for your mill-wheels, our children for
your toil,

And our forests for your pueblos must bow!

Yes, pale-face, we believe you, though 'tis little
we believe

In you who taught so much we had not
known;

For if treacherous you deem us, who has taught
us to deceive,

But yourselves? So we pay you back your own.

For the justice and the mercy you have shown
us, we'll repay,

As the red man has a memory deep and dark,
Where he keeps a faithful record of your deal-
ings day by day,

And there's not the smallest deed he fails to
mark!

And, pale-face, bows and arrows are our red pap-
poose's toys;

We have rifles, and can handle them with skill.
You have taught some useful lessons to our
little girls and boys;

But their fathers—you have taught them bet-
ter still!

We must perish? Aye, 'tis fated, and we hear it
in the wind;

For the red man is no delver in the clay.

But believe us, pale-face brother, we shall leave
a trail behind

That shall never from your memory fade away!

We must perish? Aye, but, pale-face, not like
snow-flakes shall we die

On the bosom of the gentle-flowing stream;

But like hailstones swift and fatal from the
thunder-rolling sky,

When the lightnings through the black clouds
flash and gleam!

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"Where shall I find the Kingdom of Heaven?"

I ask the guides so eager to lead;

But He alone who knoweth my need

Answers, "Within is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Ah, yes, good Lord! But what must I be?

What must I do that crown to obtain?

And the voice of the Master comes again,

"Lo, by its fruit ye shall know the tree."

"THE PRESS"—A TOAST

When dangers darken o'er the land,
And gathering tempests rise,—
When lurid lightnings glance and gleam
Across the murky skies,—
What trusty guardian seek we then
To shield us from distress,
And 'neath its shelter feel secure?
The Press, my friends, the Press!

When rulers fail their faith to keep,
And use their power for ill,
And in the sacred name of Right,
Their selfish ends fulfil,—
When injured Justice lifts her head,
And dares to ask redress,
Who pleads her cause with clarion voice?
The Press, my friends, the Press!

To keep the boon our fathers gave,
For which they fought and died,—
The boon of Freedom, bright and fair,—
A nation's dearest pride,—
What power beneath the arm of God,
Do Freedom's sons possess,
That holds the tyrant in its grasp?
The Press, my friends, the Press!

The Press, my friends, the Press,—it speaks
The burden of our souls;
If gay, it laughs; perplexed, it guides;
Oppress'd, it thunder rolls!
Then should we guard it pure and free,
That Heaven may ever bless
Our champion, advocate, and guide,—
The Press, my friends, the Press.

LADY LAKE

Hark, how from yonder banks the echoes wake,
And every footfall hath a twin-born sound,
As o'er the shingly margin of this lake

We tread! What rural beauty spreads around!
The mossy bank—the rocks—the birchen
mound—

The purple sky reflected in the wave;
And stretching onward, in the distance bound
By pine-clad hills where Echo hath her cave,—
A fair, primeval scene, unmarr'd by Mammon's
slave!

How oft has Winter's adamantine hand
Hush'd the soft murmurs of thy rippling
breast!

How oft has Summer, with her genial wand,
Again with liberty and beauty bless'd!
The forest prides that erst the valleys dress'd
Have left no remnant of their former reign;
The hills have varied with their changing vest,
(For time and tempest labor not in vain),
But thou, through every change, dost still un-
changed remain.

This is no classic ground—if such we name
Where deeds of ancient chivalry were done,
And graven on the page of deathless fame;
If such be classic ground, then this is none.
But stay; perchance e'en here were laurels won,
And valiant deeds that waked no living lyre,—
Kings may have here their race of glory run,
And heroes kindled war's consuming fire,—
Perchance these hills beheld their cradle and
their pyre!

Full oft on yonder rocky point has stood,
Long ere these waving pines first saw the day,
Nature's own son, sole lord of lake and wood,—
The dusky chieftain,—while beneath him lay
The rippling wavelet, kissing the last ray
Of the declining sun. But thou art pass'd,
Thou swarthy monarch! Thou art swept away,
As autumn's leaf before the northern blast—
Forgotten as a stone in depths of ocean cast!

And thus we fade; not these alone, but all,
Like to the ray that on yon craggy rocks
So lately shone, but vanish'd now! How small
Our tenure! Lo, at every door he knocks—
The tyrant Death,—and time's repeated shocks
Destroy e'en empire's walls! These trodden
leaves
Are last year's growth which now the present
mocks;
Ere we are born, our winding-sheet time
weaves
Our birth delights today; our death tomorrow
grieves.

THERE'S ONE WORD MORE

Oh, 'tis so hard to part!
How soon the time has fled!
But though we whisper daylight in,
Much were left unsaid.
Why, yes! I know 'tis late,—
But here we're at the door;
Yet ere I say "Good night, my love,"
There's one word more!

What was it? Ah, 'tis gone!
No matter—'tis too late.
And yet I had a thing to say,
Were it well to wait.
Good night, then, love, good night!
I'll softly close the door;
Yet stay—one little moment stay—
There's one word more!

THE ANGEL-GIRL OF THE LIGHT

The quaint old town, I remember it well,—
With its street along the strand,
The windy bay, the rocks and the reefs,
The cliffs, and the gray-blue sand.

And oft in my lonely hours, they flit
Like dreams again and again;
And ever with those far scenes, come back
The yarns of old Uncle Ben.

Ah! well I remember the brave old salt,
And his legends weird and wild,
That many a long, dark winter night,
The weary hours beguiled!

Some said Uncle Ben was cross'd in love,
And some, he was crazed with fright,
And 'twas only a dream, his oft-told tale
Of the Angel-girl of the Light.

But 'twas when the sea-winds howled without
And the big drops splash'd the pane
That the old man spun his favorite yarn
And told us the story again.

"Do you hear Mad Moll, how she roars, Uncle
Ben,
And the sea-winds, how they moan!"
"'Tis a nasty night, my lads," he would say;
"But naught to the nights I have known."

“Was it worse than this, Uncle Ben,” we ask,
“The night that the Belle was lost?”
“Aye, ten times worse—with as heavy a sea
As ever a good ship toss’d.

“Oh! human lives they come and they go,
Like the lights,” quoth Uncle Ben,
“That sparkle awhile on the crest of the wave,
And all is dark again!”

And now the old man lights his pipe,
And looks with a far-off gaze,
As if through the mists and fogs of time,
He recall’d the dim old days.

“The east wind blew, the white foam flew,
And never a star was seen;
The land lay off our starboard bow,
And the breakers roar’d between.

“With scarce a rag to the bending spars,
The good ship held her way,
Till we caught a sight of the welcome light,
Above the feathery spray.

“And so we drifted and drifted near;
Each rock and reef we pass’d,
Till high on a bank of shifting sand,
The poor Belle leaped at last!

“And then the waves they dash’d and hiss’d
And madly raved and tore,
Till naught but a mass of tangled wreck
Went tumbling on to the shore;
Then over my face a black cloud fell,
And I saw and heard no more.

"No more I knew than a babe unborn—
No more than a stock or a stone;
And how I got to the land, my lads,
To the Lord is only known!

"But when I came to myself again,
An angel stooped over me;
In her hand so white she held the light
That shone so far o'er the sea.

"Her golden locks by the winds were toss'd—
They swept o'er my cold, wet brow,
As she held my hand. But oh, that face!
Dear Lord, I can see it now!

"Well, I was a rollicking sailor then,
Of naught in the world afraid;
I work'd my way, I got my pay,
Nor cared for man nor maid.

"But oh! when I saw that sweet young face,
I felt a warm glow in my heart,
And I said, 'Sweet Angel-girl of the Light,
You and I must never part!'

" 'Thank God, he lives,' she said, as she bent
And kiss'd me on the cheek;
And my hand she press'd to her beating breast;
But never a word did speak.

"And my fingers closed on that soft, white hand,
As if no more it should go;
That her blessed beam might ever gleam
Over all my days below.

"But human lives they come and pass
Like the lights," moan'd Uncle Ben,

“That sparkle awhile on the crest of the wave,
And all goes out again!

“For scarce twelve moons had wax’d and waned,
When her Father came one night,
And said, ‘Now, Ben, you must give me again
The Angel-girl of the Light.’

“Ah, lads, but that was a thunder-bolt
From out of a clear blue sky,
With the ship at rest on the ocean’s breast,
Nor a thought of danger nigh!

“‘Dear Lord,’ I cried, ‘I know she’s good—
Too good for a man like me;
But oh! we love with a constant love,
And none are so happy as we.

“‘Oh carry her not away!’ I pray’d,
‘And leave me a drifting wreck;
For sure you have angels enough aloft,
To spare us a few on deck!’

“But ’twas all no use! The black cloud fell,
As it did on my face before,
And the winds they moan and howl and groan,
And the billows rave and roar;
But when I came to myself again,
I was all alone on the shore!

“For so she went to her home, and I
Lay wreck’d again on the strand;
But through life’s spray I can see the ray
Of a light on that far-off land—
A constant light by day and by night,—
And ’tis held in my Angel’s hand!”

THE EVENING PAPER

Shadows descending,
Labor is ending,
Homeward are wending
 Weary ones all—
Fleeing with gladness
Mammonist madness,
Meanness and badness,—
 Broken each thrall!
Rushing from day-book,
Ledger and pay-book,
Like a glad May-brook
 Leaps into light;
Sweet voices blessing them,
Loved ones caressing them—

Come with the paper that comes with night!

Then for the Babel
Round the tea-table!
All who are able
 Let their tongues run,—
Musical rattle,
Infantile prattle,
Gossip and tattle,
 Frolic and fun!
While at the end there is
Each pretty lip to kiss!
(Bachelors losing this,
 Lose all delight.)
All it is worth to live—
Best the world has to give

Come with the paper that comes with night!

THE FIRST GRAY HAIRS

"So you have found a silver hair?
Oh no! it is the light, my fair,
That falls, you see, in such a way,
It lends the lock a gleam of gray.
How like your sex to pry and peep!
'Tis time those eyes were closed in sleep.
My love, I have these blanks to fill
Ere twelve tonight. Another still!
There—that's enough; 'tis as you say,—
I'll own that hair looks somewhat gray;
But wither'd leaves are often seen
In June, when all the rest are green.
Another and another yet?
Oh, what a teasing, pretty pet,
And yet so heartless how it shoots,
To have one's hairs pluck'd by the roots!
Why, love, suppose you pluck'd them all,
Would that my vanish'd youth recall?

Ah, no; unless you pluck'd a year
From out the past, with every hair!
What! must you torture me again?
There, there!—the clock is striking ten!
The last, you say? I'm glad to know it.
I wish, my love, you were a—poet;
For then those silver hairs you find
Might seem a halo to your mind,—
Each single spear, so pearly white,
Gleam forth a ray of heavenly light—
A dim, ethereal, filmy glow—
A faint aureola, you know—
The saints are always pictured so!”
“Alas!” she sighs, “whene'er I see
Those tell-tale hairs, I think, 'For me
And for the little ones that dream
In yonder downy nest, they gleam!’
Full well I know 'twas toil and care,
Not age, that blanch'd your raven hair.”

LOST YOUTH

(Suggested by Goethe's "Faust.")

Oh, for my sunny youth again!
The bounding pulses and the vig'rous frame,
The wild, free will that naught of earth could
tame—

The supple limb—the teeming brain;
My youth—my sunny youth again!

Oh, ye delusions—airy-built!
Ye fires that lured me from the beaten way!
Fiends, phantoms!—see!—these locks are gray!
The ruby wine of life is spilt!
The sword is rusted to the hilt!

Cold is this bosom now! Forlorn
This icy heart that erst could meet and melt
With Beauty's glance—the airy hall, where dwelt
In early life's empurpled morn,
Thoughts—purposes, sublime, heaven-born!

What is it now? Approach and ope!—
Look in! A charnel-house, all dim and damp,
Where shrouded forms do grin around the lamp
Of an expiring, hopeless Hope,
And loathsome creatures flit and grope!

This heart's thin tide once leap'd and gush'd
With a most heavenly fervor! Fingers dear
Once wanton'd in the curls that cluster'd here;
And Love this pallid cheek once flush'd!
Long—long ago those flowers were crush'd!

These stony eyes once drank the beams
Of eyes as radiant as a child of light;
And we did love the fields, the woods, the night,
The mossy banks of winding streams,—
And all that brought us blissful dreams.

Such dreams as haunt the souls alone
Of Youth and Beauty—when young Hope be-
stows
Her amaranthine wreaths, and manhood glows
With promises that seem his own,—
To hearts grown older, all unknown!

Of this world's wealth, I naught possess'd;
Nor could I seek it where the vulgar seek.
I tortured Nature—begging her to speak
The awful secret of her breast—
That seem'd forever half-express'd!

Day brought no fruit, and night no sleep;
And year chased year, like bubbles on a brook;
And sometimes I would curse, and dash the book
Upon my cell's dank floor, and weep,
"Is this the harvest I must reap?"

I knew my life was waning fast;
I felt my pulse beat feebler, day by day;
My limbs grew rigid and my locks grew gray,
Till Reason whisper'd, "Youth is past—
The game is o'er—the die is cast!"

"What! past?" I cry. "Then where art thou,
My Love, whose kiss still lingers on my cheek?
What answer, fiend?" "That thou thy love
must seek
Where the pale daisies blossom now,
Beneath the yew-tree's shady bough!"

Oh, for my sunny youth again!
The bounding pulses and the vig'rous frame,
The wild, free will that naught of earth could
tame;
The supple limb—the teeming brain;
My youth—my sunny youth again!

WIFE, THE WEAVER

(The old Saxon word "wyfe" meant the household weaver.)

Wife, the weaver,—noble name,
Which from sturdy Saxon came,
When the man, with shield and bow,
March'd to meet th' invading foe;
Or in forest slew the boar;
Or the gaunt wolf at the door,
While within, the gentle wife
Sate securely, free from strife,
By her rosy brood surrounded,
Where rude health and mirth abounded,—
Crooning some love-lispings rhyme,
With her shuttle keeping time,
As beneath her fingers roll'd
Homely frieze—her cloth of gold.
Wife, the weaver; oh, 'tis she
Weaves the web of destiny,—
Weaves the web of life, which may
Gleam with threads of golden ray,
Or as black as funeral pall,
Round our dead hopes darkly fall!

ALCOHOL

Down in the realms of endless woe
They held a council long ago;
And round their chief the dark fiends came,
Crown'd with diadems of flame.
"Peers," said Satan, "Powers of Hell,
I charge ye now that ye may tell
In what the subtlest curses dwell;
Where shall we search, and where shall find
A thing with all the ills combined,
To damn and desolate mankind—
A million-essence that unites
All crimes and curses, pains and blights,—
One which may seal the human fate?
Tell me, infernal Powers of Hate!"
Then groan'd a horrid murmur round,
Like far-off thunder in the sound,
Or gaunt and famish'd beasts when they
Glare baleful on their helpless prey.
Growled one, "Here's Famine's essence sore,—
'Twill gnaw man's vitals to the core;
'Twill make him do the deed of death
That he may gasp another breath."
"'Tis well! 'tis well!" each demon cries,

And sparkles flash from flaming eyes.
Another hiss'd, "This poison'd dart
Is forged to pierce the human heart;
'Twill make man grovel in the dust
In all the beastliness of Lust!"
" 'Tis well! 'tis well!" each demon screams,
And fiercer still each eye-ball gleams.
"And this," another howled with glee,
"Contains the juice of misery,—
War, bloody war!—how red it flows!
This cup brims o'er with human woes!
'Twill wring the tears from orphan's eyes,
Like rain from out the wintry skies;
'Twill rive the widow's heart, and send
Uncounted myriads to their end."
" 'Tis well! 'tis well! Be this the curse—
No fiend in hell can wish for worse!"
"Fiends!" roar'd a demon, with a yell
That rent the murky air of hell,
And made the very devils quake
That roasted in the fiery lake,—
"Away with all your petty pains,
Your famine, war, and winter rains!
See what this grinning skull contains!
We brew'd it in the deepest hell,

And know 'twill work the mischief well;
The essence this of every woe,
Of every crime that demons know.
All-potent, in this skull you'll find
The sovereign Curse of humankind—
The dew of Hell's intensest flame,
And Alcohol shall be its name!"

At first deep silence reign'd throughout
The vast abyss, and then a shout
Roll'd up, "'Tis done! Be this the Curse;
No fiend in Hell can wish for worse!"

Then up at Heaven, his sceptred fist
The Arch-fiend shook, and howl'd and hiss'd
Through gnashing teeth, "Now, if you can,
Protect and save your pamper'd Man.
Aye, do your best, your petted Clay
Is mine to ruin from today!"

Then turning to the fiends, he said,
"Haste! haste! and let him be your head—
Your chief who bears the cup of Death;
And like the simoon's scorching breath,
Sweep earth, until nor track nor trace
Of God shall mark the human race!"

So swarm'd they forth, and thus began
The curse of Alcohol on Man.

THE PAST

Oh, there are seasons when the Past
Comes o'er the mind like shadows cast
By drifting clouds o'er summer seas,
Whose blue waves, crested by the breeze,
Grow gray awhile and dark and dun,
As if they mourn'd the absent sun.
The soul grows sick with pensive pain,
 As half-remember'd scenes arise,
 And faces flit before our eyes,
 And words of love and notes of song,
 And days and deeds forgotten long,
Float back in airy forms again!
Float back; but like the fairy bird
 That trembles o'er the honey'd leaf—
 A winged emerald, bright and brief,
That melts ere one can say the word—
These visions fade—a gleam—no more,
To leave us lonelier than before!

HER REASON FOR LIVING

One day I saw a wither'd hag—
A wretched, wrinkled, ragged crone—
Who, from an ash-heap, filled her bag,
And that with many a weary groan.

I ask'd, "What are you doing here?"
Whereat she cast a glance at me,
And with a grin from ear to ear,
Said, "Pickin' cinders, don't you see?"

"What for?" I asked. "Why, what d'you think?
To burn o' course—what else?" she said:
"To thaw my joints, and warm my drink,
And soak my frozen crust o' bread!

"What for, indeed!—an' I so cold,
With narry a tooth around my jaws!
You'll know yourself when you grow old,"
She whined, and shook her skinny claws.

"Poor, friendless creature," I persist,
"Why longer bear the life you do?
Why strive to live?" When back she hiss'd,
"'Cause life 's as sweet to me as you!"

TO AN OFT-REJECTED POEM

What! here again, thou worse than Noah's dove,
That bringest nothing green back, howe'er
small

To this poor ark, that scarce can ride above
The whelming waves or weather out the squall!

Thou luckless waif, will no one take thee in?

Does every magazine deny thee rest?

Hast thou no merit nor no art to win

Regard from any editorial breast?

Ah! little do they know the anxious pain

Thy hapless parent suffer'd at thy birth!—

The brilliant hopes he foster'd—all in vain!—

Of wealth and fame contingent on thy worth.

Alas! they tell me thou art poor and lame,

And weak and rickety upon thy shanks;

Not in these terms of course, but, all the same,

They mean it when they say, "Declined with
thanks."

CAPTAIN GREEN'S LOG-BOOK

Rough and rugged as a bear-skin,
But as warm, was Captain Green,
Sitting in the cosey cabin
Of his ship, the Ocean Queen,—
Smoothing out a wrinkled volume
With a wondrous careful hand,
Seeming not to heed the distance
We were rolling from the land.

Now he nods, and smiles, and whispers,
While his eyelids overflow—
Acts so strangely that we ask him
What those blotted pages show.
And the captain draws his coat-sleeve
O'er his face, and answers slow,
"Well, my friend, this blotted volume
Is my log, if you must know."

Often had we heard of log-books
Kept by sailors on the deep,
But within the mystic pages
Never chanced to get a peep;
So the captain let us take it,
And we looked it o'er and o'er;
But to find it filled with pictures—
Inky daubs, and nothing more!

"Aye; to you," he said, "they may be
Only scratches on the sheet;
But to me they speak a language
Ever new and true and sweet;
For they tell me of my cottage,
Where the hearth is glowing bright—
Where my little one is lisping
Prayers for me this stormy night.

Mighty precious is this volume,
When I'm out here on the main!
See this picture in the corner,
Don't you know it? Look again.
That's supposed to be my likeness,
With a child upon my knee.
Well, that child 's my little Mattie,
Who made every mark you see;

Every scratch and every scribble
Tells me of my Mattie's hand;
Not a sweeter little lassie
Lives, I vow, in any land!
Sure, I would not cross the ocean
For a fortune, without this!
No indeed; for every picture,
Scratch and scribble means a kiss!

So, of course, I never see them
But I feel her velvet cheek
Pressing mine——" (But here the captain
Grew so hoarse he scarce could speak.)
"No; you do not know what comfort
From these blotted leaves I reap,
When between me and my Mattie
Rolls the cold and lonely deep!"

SPRING

Spirit of Spring, by whose mysterious power
The lifeless clod resumes its emerald vest;
Whose fairy fingers form th' incipient flower,
Who breathes vitality in Nature's breast—
We hail thy coming in our cold, bleak clime;
Thy voice proclaims the reign of Winter o'er,
Thy voice—the music of a fairy chime,
That perfumed zephyrs waft from some enchanted shore!

O Spring! to me thou ever wert most dear,
Though luscious fruit nor golden grain are
thine;
But Youth, the earnest of the coming year,
Sheds o'er thy beauteous face a ray divine;
And more than for thy beauty thee I prize,
(Since beauty fades like hues of parting day,)
Hope speaks me onward through thy beaming
eyes,
As in the rosy hours that time hath stol'n
away.

When, through the vista of departed days,
Dim flit the shades of half-forgotten scenes,
When our young lives felt not the weight of cares
That on the arm of burdened manhood leans;
What bygone joys so close to memory cling,
Or start so soon the tear of fond regret,
As those which fill'd our infant souls when
Spring
Unveiled the slumb'ring moss, with sparkling
dew-drops wet!

We thought—vain thought!—we never more
should know

The desolating storm, the cold, rude rain;
But Spring, like vestal fires, forever glow,
And vernal blooms eternally remain!
Fair days of sweet simplicity and love!
Bright hours of innocence without alloy,
When our young souls seemed link'd with souls
above;
And the green world around a paradise of joy!

E'en now, as some poor prisoner of despair,
Who day by day bemoan'd his hapless fate,
Inhales with rapturous joy the ambient air,
When far behind he leaves his dungeon gate;
So we, released from Winter's tyrant sway,
Bathe our glad bosoms in th' ethereal tide—
Bask in the beams of Spring's rekindling ray,
And tune our amorous lyres to hail the coming
bride!

Spirit of Spring, what mystic laws are thine!
What mind can penetrate thy wondrous art!
We can no more than offer on thy shrine
That bloodless sacrifice, a grateful heart.
What secret power calls forth the tender blade;
Whence comes the life that animates the clod;
How flowers are dyed, perfumed; trees, rocks
arrayed,—
Can mortal tongues declare? No tongue declare
but God!

Then let my feet the dewy carpet press,
While orient Phœbus leads the hours along,
And oh, my soul, thy ardent joy express
In secret praise, if not in glowing song!
Flow on, ye gurgling rills,—with me rejoice;
Blow softly, winds, and mingle in the strain;
Ye groves be vocal with harmonious voice,
And roll thy mighty bass, thou far-resounding
main!

ENGLISH SPARROWS

They call us a nuisance, they do, my son,
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
And threaten to slaughter us every one,
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
And yet they allured us from over the sea,
And bade us be happy as happy could be,
And feel that we live in the land of the free!
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
And now that we multiply, many and great,
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
And pick up a living both early and late,
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
All through the Winter, so stormy and cold,
As well as the Summer, these Yankees they
scold,
And say we are saucy and selfish and bold;
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
But how did they "guess" we were going to live,
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
Unless we pick'd up what they promised to give?
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!
But they'll find it not easy to drive us away!
We are growing in number and power each day,
So, don't you forget it, we've come here to stay!
Hoppity, chippitty, chip!

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

By chance we met and scanned each other's face;
I thought I had not changed, though she, alas!
Betrayed in every lineament, the trace
Of subtle Time.

"And you would let me pass
Unrecognized!" I said; "and I the same
As when, that sunny morn, the sea-breeze
fann'd

Our glowing cheeks at Newport, and we came
And sat upon the rocks, and wrote in sand
Each other's name!"

She shook her head and smiled
A tristful, dreamy smile.

"How should I know?"
She sighed; "for I was then a girl—a child,
And that was more than twenty years ago!"

STEAM

(Through Grandfather's Spectacles.)

Oh, how you plague me with your whirr and
puff,

You cloud-compelling, all-propelling steam!
Of thee, I've seen and felt and heard enough,

Heaven knows,—since many a sweet, romantic
dream,

(That Shakespeare truly tells us is the stuff

We're made of,) hast thou scatter'd with thy
scream,—

Thou rude invader of my sylvan shade!

(The F. R. R. is through my orchard laid.)

I grant that thou art mighty, and hast wrought

Great changes in the land, and given to man

A superhuman magnitude, and brought

The limits of the world within a span;

But which of all the virtues owes thee aught?

Is human nature purer, loftier than

When winds were made the objects of devotion,

And holy rites appeased the God of ocean?

What though with fiendish yell thou dost outstrip

The panting gales, hast thou not stript away

One-half life's fancies? Call you that a ship—

That clanking, reeking, floating forge, I pray?

Where are the snowy sails that swell and dip—

The whistling ropes, tall spars, and pennons
gay;

And all so graceful, docile, fair, and free,

That men have ever named a ship a She?

What though thou dost defy both time and space,

And shoot one like an arrow from a bow,—

Should every little ramble be a race,
Pack'd in and whistled off, where'er we go—
As though in sooty Pluto's hot embrace,
And hurried shrieking to the shades below?
Whate'er thy deeds, on this there is no cavil—
Thou hast destroyed the poetry of travel!

For now there are no fields, no dells, no streams,
No charming views to give the journey zest,
No overarching trees through which day's beams
Sift down like golden threads in Nature's vest;
No sauntering o'er the hills, no drowsy dreams,
No warbling birds, no thimby breeze, no rest,
No lunch al-fresco by some babbling rill,
While thirsty steeds the sparkling nectar swill!

Then, where's the wayside inn for which we
sigh'd

In our young days,—with hospitable door,
With chirping landlord and his buxom bride?
The glowing hearth, the neatly-sanded floor,
The downy bed, the larder well-supplied,
The pewter pot with "nut-brown" foaming
o'er,

The sidelong-glancing maiden's blooming cheek,
That made one wish the storm might last a week!

Where are the coach-and-fours—the jolly
guards—

The muffled drivers with their wheezy jokes—
The gabled taverns with their spacious yards
Alive with all those quaint and curious folks—
Monks, palmers, peddlers, highwaymen, and
bards,

In hose-and-douplet, steeple-hat and cloaks?
Give these; and you, for aught I care, may go,
In forty winks, from here to Jericho!

TO H. B.

(In acknowledgement of a copy of verses.)

Amid the harsh, discordant notes
That hurtle from a hundred throats,
More like the bleat of sheep and goats
 Than human speech,
At times a tuneful pæan floats
 Within my reach.

Like some shy bird that sweetly sings
A song of blessed hope, and flings
A ballad to the breeze, that brings
 To fancy's ken
A glimpse of higher, holier things
 And nobler men.

For as I list, I hear the bees
In murmuring swarms, and see the trees
Break into bloom, and feel the breeze,
 With fragrance sweet,
Come softly o'er the summer seas,
 My brows to greet.

So I forget the wintry blast,
With all the perils of the past,
And, dreaming I am safe at last,
 I want no more,
My mainsail furl'd, my anchor cast,
 I step ashore.

I press the silver-sanded beach,
And, every joy within my reach,
I ask the little birds to teach
 My lips to praise,
That we may warble each to each
 Through endless days!

'Tis thus, my bard, whene'er your song
My spirit greets amid the throng
Of souls that rush and roar along
 This crowded life,
Where wrong is right and right is wrong,
 And all 's at strife—

'Tis thus you lead me by the hand
Into a larger, fairer land,
Where all that 's heavenly may expand,
 Like vernal flowers,
And where, amid the tuneful band,
 Sweet Peace is ours.

THE MOTHERLESS

We missed her when the morning sun
In floods of beauty pour'd;
We missed her in the matin hymn,
And round the family board.
And wand'ring 'mong the dewy flowers,
Sweet voices filled the air,
But something seem'd to murmur still
Of one that was not there.

And when our little playmates came,
They came not as of old,—
Their clouded brows and whisper'd words
The same sad story told.
And e'en the idle village group
Respected our distress,—
And mirth grew silent on the lips
That sigh'd, "The Motherless!"

When at the evening's peaceful close
We breathed the vesper prayer,
Oh, how each aching bosom felt
One voice a-wanting there!—
One gentle voice that ever fell
Like soft, angelic strains,—
Or mingling in our merriment,
Or soothing in our pains.

We missed her when the autumn leaves
Went rustling o'er the ground,
We miss'd her when the ice-king raved
In storm and darkness round.
Nor have the rolling years effaced
The wound thus early made,—
Full oft we feel that "aching void,"
In sunshine or in shade.

DECEIVED

With honeyed words he won her heart,
And led her from her father's hall,
And bade her hope for more than all
The love from which she wept to part;

And she believed him kind and true;
And so released her last embrace
Of mother's arms, and turn'd her face
To scenes far-off and faces new.

"A right good man have we allied
Our daughter with—a man of mind,"
Her father said. "I trust she'll find
A constant heart," the mother sigh'd.

And soon again the hearth grew bright,
And ev'ry doubt was lull'd to rest;
And blest because their child was blest,
The good old pair rejoiced that night.

But scarce a year has pass'd since then,
And Mary sits alone in tears,—
Alone, alone,—and only hears
The steeples chime and chime again,—

And shudders as the night-winds moan;
While he, amid the reeling throng,
Where flows the wine and swells the song,
Heeds not that Mary sits alone.

THE COUNTRY BOY

Ah! city friends, don't slight, I pray,
The country lad who comes your way.
Uncultured he, perhaps, and shy;
But look in the depths of his honest eye
And see the truth and purity there,
The manly purpose, the worth that will wear,
And traits of character rich and rare!
Be civil, at least; the answer you give
To his mild request, in his mind may live
To please or plague him all of his life,—
A soothing balm or a poison'd knife!
"Kind words are cheap," says the proverb old,
'Tis false, or why are they rarer than gold!
Don't blast his hope, or crush his heart,
Or cruelly cause his pride to smart;
For, friends, believe me, this is true,—
He may be rough, uncultured, shy,
With blushing cheek and downcast eye;
But yet, that boy you deign to view,—
That boy is just as proud as you!
And he who despises that lad knows naught
Of the vein of gold in his being wrought.

For who are the men that rule the State,—
The Rich, the Wise, the Good, the Great?
Were they not nurtured 'mong the hills,
The spreading meads and sparkling rills?
Or where the pines their tassels shake,
Or where the wild sea-billows break?
Glance o'er the list of mighty names
That on the roll of honor flames,
And you will find the vast array
Did from the the meadows wend their way;
Stout, stalwart sons of toil were they,
Who breathed the purest air that blows,
O'er blooming fields and driven snows;
Lithe of limb and stout of heart,
Ready to take the hero's part.
As David left his flocks to fight
Philistia's boastful man of might,
And there, defenceless and alone,
Destroy'd an army with a stone,
So now you find in every town,
The men who bring the giants down,—
The men who mould the people's wills
Were nurtured 'mongst the fields and hills.

CONTENTMENT

Far in a desert wide and bleak,
A modest flow'ret sprung,—
Alone,—for not a shrub was near,
And not a plant the sand did bear

But this poor thing—as though 'twere flung,
With slender stem and eye so meek,
An outcast from its kind, to seek
A lodgement anywhere.

“Thou lonely gem, so fair, so sweet,—

Ah, pity you should be
From man and flow'r so many a pace,
Where none your modest, matchless grace
And tints so exquisite may see!
Poor hermit-blossom, thee I greet,
As when in foreign lands we meet
A friend's familiar face!”

Methought the flow'rets voice arose,

In accents mild and low:
“The Hand that formed the earth you tread,
That stretch'd the heavens above your head,
My single seedling here did sow,—
What heavenly wisdom doth dispose,
Content no higher station knows;
So here I'll scent each breeze that blows,
Till all my leaves are shed.”

COMING EVENTS

("Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."--Daniel xii. 4.)

Child of the faithless breast,
With the fool's tinsel dress'd,
Loving to bask
In the soft pleasure-beam,
And without measure dream,
Why dost thou ask,—

"Man of the thoughtful brow,
Where are the prophets now—
Are they not dead?
Age-dust concealing them,
Time not revealing them,—
Vain to be read!"

Mole of humanity,
Sin and profanity,
Words of insanity
Thoughtlessly speaking!
Dim are those eyes of thine,
Dark are those skies of thine;
What are thou seeking?

Out from the earthly holes,
Only for bats and moles,—
Sightless their eyes!
Lo, the prophetic Day!
Light, with a wonder-ray,
Bright'neth the skies!

Not such a time, I ween,
Ever on earth was seen,
 As draweth near;
When a like mystery
In the world's history,
 As doth appear?

Hark to the ceaseless roll
Sounding from pole to pole,—
 Living waves flow!
Nations of ev'ry shade,
People of ev'ry grade,
 Run to and fro!

Each with a knowledge-ray,
Turning the night to day,—
 Falsehood down-hurl'd!
Truth with her trumpet-blast,
Gathering her legions vast,
 Over the world!

Canst thou the meaning read?
Dost thou the warning heed?
 Time ever flies!
See to those lamps of thine;
Empty, they dimly shine;
 'Wake and arise!

THE NEWFOUNDLAND EMIGRANT'S FAREWELL

Dear Land of my birth, ere the mists of the deep
Conceal thy dark cliffs from my lingering view,
Though willing to leave thee, yet, leaving, I
weep,—
Let a prayer for thy weal be my parting adieu!

I leave thee; but yet not alone do I leave
The home of my childhood, the haunts of my
youth;
But the souls and the scenes that first taught me
to weave
The iris-hued mantle of beauty and truth.

Oh yes; they may scorn thy bleak face if they
may,
Who feel not the life-blood that throbs at the
core;
Nor the gush of thy friendship as free as the day
For all who set foot on thy storm-beaten
shore!

What stranger e'er sought thee, that sought thee
unbless'd?
What child ever left thee without a regret?
And who that has clung to thy generous breast
Could bid thee forever farewell—and forget?

What memories gather, as dimly recede
Those ramparts that smile at the tempest and
billow!

The lake and the hillside—"the barrens"—the
mead—

The dark-frowning cliff and the pond 'neath
the willow—

The "plains" by the sea-side—the walk by the
wall—

The pine-cover'd vale where so often I roved;
But fresher the mem'ries, and dearer than all,
Of the hearth-stones encircled by friends whom
I loved!

Farewell! Thou art gone!—not a vestige in sight!
Farewell!—all my soul is poured out in the
word.

Naught is seen save the chill, misty curtain of
night;

'And naught but the voice of Old Ocean is
heard.

PLEASURE AND GLORY

There journeyed a stranger o'er Araby's sand,
All weary and faint with the toils of the way,
Long emptied of water the cruse in his hand,
And void was his scrip ere the dawning of day.
Yet onward he labored, for dimly was seen
A rock in the distance; his heart was elate
With the hope of a fountain and pasturage green,
Where shaded the cypress and clustered the
date.

He came to the spot; but the rock was a mound,
The dates and the cypress were withered and
sere;
And lo, when the hope-promised fountain was
found,
He started, for naught but a viper was there!
So the mirage of pleasure we mortals pursue,
And labor the fountain of glory to gain;
But say, when we reach what so long is in view,
Do we more than the poor, famished Arab
attain?

SMILES AND TEARS

I weep with a smile on my lip,
I smile with a tear on my cheek;
But half that I feel I dare not reveal,
And vain are the words that I speak!

CASTLES IN THE AIR

("Man never is, but always to be blest."—Pope.)

What is Life but expectation—
Dreaming ever something near;
Ending all in sore vexation,
Thorny chaplets, gilded air!
Thus we live on fancied pleasures,
Fancied honors, fancied treasures,—
Still to hope and dream again,
Though to dream and hope in vain!

Thoughtless childhood hails the light,
Not with heaven-adoring joy,
But with dreams that mid-day bright
Will reveal the wished-for toy.
Noon is passed; they sigh and say.
"Eve will bring it—come away!"
Still to hope and dream again,
Though to dream and hope in vain!

Evening cometh—stars are beaming—
Vespers soothe each sainted breast;
But the graybeards still are dreaming
Of the prizes unpossess'd,—
Whispering, with a pang of sorrow,
"Surely, it will come tomorrow!"
But when daylight dawns again,
Find they not their hopes are vain?

TOO LATE!

Too late to plant the tender seed,
The sowing-time is past;
Too late to prop the drooping vine,
I hear the wintry blast!

Too late to gather fruit again,
The orchard trees are bare;
Too late to search the autumn fields,
The gleaners have been there!

Too late to rear a temple now,
The building time is o'er;
Too late to shift the rudder now,
I hear the breakers roar!

THE DROWNED BOY

'Tis gone! the spark of life is quench'd,
The little heart has ceased its rapid beating,—
The cheek is cold—the golden locks all drench'd,
And the young soul has gone to heavenly
greeting!

See, yonder is his little boat,
Awaiting but this hand to guide its motion!
Nay, little argosy, 'tis thine to float
Alone, unguided, to the boundless ocean.

Ah, scarce an hour ago, these eyes,
So fixed and leaden, danced with life and
gladness,
Like ever mild and beaming summer skies,
That ne'er grew sullen with a cloud of sadness!

These lips that but a brief hour past
Lay on a mother's cheek like opening roses,
Are now as lilies crush'd by sudden blast—
In whose soft folds still loveliness reposes.

His mother! Who shall bear the tale,
That this, her tender bud she loved and cher-
ished—
Her single sunbeam in life's tearful vale—
Her joy—her only hope—her boy—has per-
ished!

YOUNG LOVE'S DREAM

Last eve we wander'd where the moonbeams lay
Serenely on the deep—a mirror fair,
Extending far and wide,—reflecting clear
The varied beauties of the dying day.
Sweet scene; but sweeter still to view
In thy fond eyes, affection deep and true,—
Pure, fervent, heavenly, beautiful and calm!
And oh, love, as I gazed, your lips such balm
Dropp'd on my soul, that ev'ry trace of care
Was wiped away, and naught was potent
there
But joy supreme, complete—joy in thy joy—
Life in thy love—that time cannot destroy;
But must increase, as heavenward still we
glide,
Urged by each favoring breeze and swelling
tide!

THE SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

There is a beauty Beauty doth enfold—
A presence felt, not seen—an affluence—
A soul that speaketh speechless things, as 'twere
Through eyes innumerable, everywhere—
Which, unperceived, doth grant but little seen.
'Tis not in harmony the most complete
Of color, form, or sound alone we trace
The subtle soul of what doth live in such.
This life essential mocks e'en thought itself,
While drops the brush from hands incompetent,
And which, once felt, the mightiest masterpiece
Of mimic art is but a failure still;
The glowing canvas mirrors all but this!
And thus the loftiest minds die not of age,
Disease, or want—they perish of despair!

CHANGED

The hills may rise, the rivers flow,
Nor changed their beauty, form, or name,—
Each star retain its wonted glow,—
But we are not the same,
My friend,
Ah! we are not the same.

You say that Fate may yet restore
Those scenes and visions, warm and bright;
The scenes, she may; but nevermore,
The dreams that gave delight,
Alas!
The dreams that gave delight!

Though time may not have wrought decay,
Nor grace nor loveliness estranged,
The soul—the soul has pass'd away,
Since you and I have changed,
My friend,
Since you and I have changed!

THE BALL-ROOM BELLE

Though Beauty around me doth shine,
Though sweetest of melodies rise,
Yet all that I witness combine
To sadden each moment that flies!
Ah, seest thou yon maiden whose face
May the envy of Venus excite—
Whose blushes successively chase,
Like Aurora the heavens by night?

Her beauty, aurora-like, too,
Now bright'neth the circles around;
But just as we're charmed with the view,
It is gone—and no more can be found!
A few years of gladness and woe—
A few years of sunshine and shade,
And these exquisite touches, we know,
Must, alas! must eternally fade!

O Heaven! why loveliness give
To beings whose life is a day—
Who are scarcely beginning to live,
Before they begin to decay?
This daffodil thing of an hour—
Though modest and mild as the dove—
Yet sways what a world-moving power,—
The passion—the madness of Love!
As frail as the sensitive bud,
That to touch, it will cease to exist;
As strong as Niagara's flood,
That adamant cannot resist!

Fair maiden, thy moments are gold;
What livest thou, then, to display?
A rainbow! and what wilt thou hold
What that rainbow hath faded away?

“OUR WILLIE”

(An autumnal Sketch at Mount Auburn Cemetery.)

A gentle maiden, young and lovely,
Stands in mute and mystic gloom,
While the sinking sun, her shadow
Casts upon a little tomb.
Everywhere the storied marble,
Tells where mould'ring greatness lie;
But this little mound and maiden
Most attract the passing eye.

“Wherefore—wherefore, sylph-like creature—
With a gloom beyond thy days,
Dost thou through the pearly shower,
On that simple tablet gaze?
Time enough for thee to weep yet
O'er the ills of human-kind;
Soon, too soon, thou'lt feel life's burdens,
Soon, too soon, its sorrows find.”

But without one answering sentence,
Still she droops her radiant head;
Tranquil all is, save the sere leaves
Autumn sprinkles o'er the dead;—
One by one these deathly emblems,
Quivering, rustling o'er the ground,
Seem as though each shrouded tenant
Of the tombs were gliding round;
While the golden flood of evening
Bathes each marble, tree, and mound.

Gently tread—the ground is holy!
See whose dust she weepeth o'er;
Lo, the simple superscription—
“Our Willie”—nothing more!
That's enough! These pregnant letters
Speak a volume to the heart,
Full of more pathetic meaning
Than the labored lines of art.

Love divine—mysterious heaven-light,
Glimmering e'en through earthly glooms,
Why take up thy fickle dwelling
In this world of tears and tombs?
Spring brings out the beauteous blossom,
Summer breathes her ripening breath,
But, when harvest should be gather'd,
Lo, we find decay and death!

Maiden, let this good old lesson
Ever in thy memory live,—
“Earthly promises are bubbles,
Glittering only to deceive.
Look beyond the pearly portals,
Far in yon ethereal deep,
For the Graces without fading,
And the Loves that never sleep.”

TRUST IN THE LORD

("They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."
—Ps. cxxv. 1.)

Assist me, Lord, to place my trust
In thee, from whom my being came;
Thy hand is merciful, though just,—
In each event of life the same.

It hath my falt'ring steps sustained
When gath'ring doubts obscured the truth;
And in temptation's hour restrained
The careless impulses of youth.

Thou hast my daily needs supplied
With daily bounties from above;
And what to me Thou hast denied,
Thou hast alone denied in love.

Then may my faith be ever bright,
My feet to guide, my doubts to chase;
And morning, evening, noon, or night,
To trust Thee where I cannot trace.

NEVER DESPAIR

Never despair, with strength and health,—
Something beyond the reach of wealth.
Rain must fall, and the heavens must frown,
And flowers must fade, and fields grow brown,
And riches are winged like thistle-down.
From under the rocky ribs of the earth
Come light and heat of the winter hearth;
And up from the deep, dark caves of the sea
Are brought the pearls of the kings to be;
And out of the flint they crush the gold,
And water with sweat the seed in the mould;
And the sword that never is drawn from sheath
Shall win no fame the heavens beneath.
Then hold thee up with a manly brow,
And meet the storm that is driving now.
So long as there are millions to feed,
Millions to clothe, and millions to lead,
So long must the Plough, the Loom, the Pen
Await the guidance of earnest men.
Only be true to yourself and the right,
And the rising day will banish the night.

L'ENVOI

(From the Author's first volume, published in 1859.)

Go forth, my little book—go forth alone;
I may not journey with thee; thou must be
Thine own defender. Let thy youth atone
For aught of imperfection friends may see
Within thee. Much in sorrow hast thou grown,
And much in joyousness, till thou of me
Became the counterpart, and ever true—
Showing upon thy face each varied hue.

My frequent solace through long weary years
And solitary hours,—and when to pour
Such wayward thoughts as vagrant Fancy
bears,

My only pleasure! Now, these seasons o'er,
The dead Past with her changing beam appears
A broken rainbow arching a dim shore!
And yet I would not quench this feeble flame,
Though hopeless of youth's hope—a poet's fame!

Strange thoughts have visited my soul, like sails
Upon the far horizon's misty verge;
But, anchorless, they passed;—the gales
Of cold reality arose—the surge
Of Life's unrest—that over all prevails,
Till the torn bark in heavenly seas emerge,—
Swept wildly o'er them; and the clouded night
Came swiftly onward hiding all from sight!

The sunbeams dart through myriad leagues of
space

As dark as Erebus until they fall
Upon some lonely world that lifts her face
In glowing gratitude,—and so to all
Come beams from Heaven; but finding oft no
place

To rest upon—no mind prepared—the pall
Of dead obscurity still wraps them round,
And the Promethean limbs remain unbound!

For such there is no refuge but to dream;
And to be scorn'd for nursing plants that bear
No fruit;—to grasp at things that only seem
Realities—cloud-castles hung in air,
And vain, delusive fires that brightest gleam
When the most faithless ways they lure you
near;—

To chase the rainbow for the gold that lies
Beneath her foot; yet never find the prize!

But I have learned to see my castles fall
With scarce a sigh—Time teaching me to
build

Yet others—belted with a firmer wall
Than clouds; and if not lofty, safe, and fill'd
With what affords a deeper joy than all
The unsubstantial fantasies that thrilled
The youthful spirit flitting o'er fair flowers,
In that fresh, rosy morn of dreamy hours!

* * * * *

Then go!—while cherish'd thoughts of thee shall
dwell

Long in his heart who bids thee now Farewell!





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